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Wednesday, January 20, 2010

\$1.00

Volume 37, No. 3 • 36 pages • 3 sections

* Fighting drugs Youth Substance Abuse Coalition formed to battle growing scourge

By Michael Scharnow
Times Editor

A local coalition is being formed among community leaders to battle the ever-present problem of teenage alcohol and drug abuse.

The first "working meeting" of the Fountain Hills Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition is slated for Jan. 27.

Carole Giroux, a licensed professional counselor with experience in the drug prevention field, is heading up the group.

According to the latest local data, among students at Fountain Hills High School, alcohol and cigarette usage rates exceed state averages with particularly higher rates among seniors smoking marijuana.

"Basically by the time a kid reaches his or her senior year, about a third of them are smoking pot and three-fifths of them are drinking," Giroux said.

"Not good."

Giroux is formulating the coalition based on federal guidelines and actively pursuing state and federal grants to fund future endeavors.

The coalition will pursue a "community approach" to prevention and use environmental strategies as a means to address preven-

tion of underage alcohol and substance abuse in Fountain Hills.

"You cannot count on a teen's knowledge of health and legal risks and just say no' skills or rules in a home, school suspensions or even jail time to keep kids from drinking and using," Giroux said.

"It takes teen skills and knowledge of risks, parent-

"Basically by the time a kid reaches his or her senior year, about a third of them are smoking pot and three-fifths of them are drinking."

~ Carole Giroux

ing structure, laws, school policies and more."

Giroux wants to change the mind set of parents and other community members alike, including business owners, to combat teen drinking and drug abuse.

"If underage access to alcohol and substances is everywhere, and the topic of belief is that it is acceptable, you can't expect a healthy, well-groomed fish to live in a polluted pond," Giroux said.

Last year alone, there

were 120 underage alcohol consumption violations in Fountain Hills.

"Typically rural towns, such as Fountain Hills, report higher usage rates of alcohol and substances by teens, and this is holding true in Fountain Hills," Giroux said.

Capt. John Kleinheinz, local commander for the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office, said Fountain Hills definitely has its share of drug and alcohol problems involving teens.

"I welcome and will certainly embrace and support a comprehensive program that will address the destructive nature of substance abuse," Kleinheinz said.

"The point is this - any educational element or program that prevents a teen or young adult from being entangled in the web of drug or alcohol abuse is worth all of our attention."

Following are some more local statistics garnered by Giroux through a student survey at FHHS:

* 10th grade FHHS alcohol use (past 30 days) is 52 percent; state average is 48 percent.

* 12th grade FHHS alcohol use (past 30 days) is 60 percent; state average is 59 percent.

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The Chamber of Commerce 2009 award recipients gathered at the conclusion of the annual dinner for photographs. Business Person of the Year award went to, from left, Anthony and Carolyn Redendo, and Douglas Schmidt, second from right; Beverly Belury, third from left, was selected Advocate of the Year. Mark McDermott, right, accepted the Non-Profit of the Year for Fountain Hills Community Foundation.

Schmidt, Redendos tie for Business Person of Year

By Barb Charzuk
Times Reporter

For the first time in 23 years, owners of two businesses share the Chamber of Commerce Business Person of the Year award.

Carolyn and Anthony Redendo, owners of Redendo's Pizza and Pasta, and Douglas Schmidt of Legacy Asset Management, split the 2009 honor.

The Business Person of the Year for 2008, Dr. Matthew J. Hummel, announced the identities of the co-winners Saturday night at the annual dinner.

Slightly less than 100 attended the festivities in Rio Verde Country Club.

The vote count was exactly the same for the Redendos and Schmidt, said Chamber President Frank Ferrara. Chamber members voted at the December meeting or they could download a ballot



Two sets of sisters were among the dignitaries attending the Chamber gala. They are, from left, Margaret Davis and her sister, Dr. Liz Smith; Beverly Belury, right, was accompanied by her sister, Gail Minkin.

from the Chamber's Web site and submit the form.

The Chamber has no provision for breaking tie votes, said Ferrara.

"We never figured there would be a tie," said Ferrara. "That (a runoff process) may be something that we look at again."

The Redendos were cited for their involvement in providing food for numerous community fundraisers.

Originally from Queens,

New York, they opened an Italian restaurant on the northwest corner of Saguardo and Shea boulevards in 2002.

Carolyn Redendo said she and her husband were lucky to choose Fountain Hills to operate their business and raise four sons. Redendo said they have "realized the extraordinary ways" that they can change

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* COALITION: Alcohol abuse big problem

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percent.

* 10th grade FHHS marijuana use (past 30 days) is 20 percent; state average is 22 percent.

* 12th grade FHHS marijuana use (past 30 days) is nearly 31 percent; state average is 25 percent.

As for underage alcohol consumption and possession charges in Fountain Hills, three years ago there were 51 citations; two years ago, 88; and this past year, 120.

That trend continues for citations involving drug possession and/or drug paraphernalia – 48 citations three years ago, 58 two years ago; and 83 this past year.

According to the Pacific Institute for Research

and Evaluation, underage drinking cost the citizens of Arizona \$1.3 billion in 2005.

These costs include medical care, work loss and pain and suffering associated with the multiple problems resulting from the use of alcohol by youths.

Arizona ranks 13th highest among the 50 states for the cost per youth of underage drinking.

Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence and are two and a half times more likely to become abusers of alcohol than those who begin drinking at age 21, according to the *Journal of Substance Abuse*.

With her background in counseling, Giroux said that people can make it through most life challenges unscathed unless they get caught in the web of substance abuse at a young age.

“You don’t become addicted the first time you try something, or maybe even the first few years, but the continued use can create havoc not only on the kid but also on families, marriages and communities,”

Giroux said.

She moved here from Chapel Hill, N.C., where she was heavily involved with a grassroots coalition trying to make a difference in “cleaning up the polluted pond.”

“When I moved here, within weeks I started hearing the same issues were here as were in North Carolina,” Giroux added.

“This issue is everywhere, and I find it unacceptable!”

Representatives on coalition

The Fountain Hills Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition will initially consist of 15 “sectors” from the community, various members of which have been recruited by Carole Groux, who is chairing the group.

“We are extremely grateful to all the sector representatives,” Groux said. “Thank you for your commitment to a healthy community for our youths.”

Groux has been following coalition development guidelines provided by the Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America, based on the Drug Free Communities Act of 1997, since the coalition’s inception in August of 2009.

The group is completing the collection of necessary data for the assessment phase of coalition development.

Those who have questions about the coalition or want to volunteer in some capacity should contact Groux at (480) 335-7216.

Initial coalition members or those attending the first working meeting on Jan. 27 include:

Schools – FHUSD Superintendent Dr. Bill Myhr and Athletic Director Mike Briguglio.

Law enforcement – Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office Capt. John Kleinheinz, Lt. Brian Jakowinicz, Sgt. Jerry Funk and Dep. Jill Oschner, school resource officer.

Media – Mike Scharnow, editor of The Fountain Hills Times.

Business community – Fountain Hills Chamber of Commerce President Doug Schmidt and Diana Song, co-owner of Fountain Bowl.

Agency with substance abuse expertise – MaryEllen Tinsley, executive director of the Scottsdale Prevention Institute.

Local government – Mayor Jay Schlum and Vice Mayor Cassie Hansen.

Youth serving organization – Rich Schultz of the Boys and Girls Club.

Town serving organization – Mark Mayer, director of the Parks and Recreation Department.

Parents – Mike Vaught and Bruce Henslin.

Religious organization – Christ’s Church Youth Minister Jared Fox.

Youth – High school student Gary Krainz.

Civic and volunteer group – Victoria Caltabiano, founder of C.A.R.E. Fountain Hills.

Healthcare – Ken Greenstreet, physical therapist and Spooner & Shaft Physical Therapy.

State agency with substance abuse expertise – Jessica Smith, Arizona SADD state director; Denise Lopez, Magellan Health Services of Arizona prevention coordinator.

Partnering coalitions – Henry Beauduy of Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation and Joronda Montano of Mesa Prevention Alliance.
