



Full-Court Press On Teenage Drinking

By: Larry Hendricks
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The presentation begins with introducing Phoenix teen Jackqui Saburido. Her picture shows a vibrant young woman ready for the promise of her adult life. The next picture shows her, badly burned, the path of her life changed forever. Saburido was driving home one night. On the way home, her car was hit by a drunken teenaged driver. She survived, but her two friends in her car with her did not.

In an effort to cut down on alcohol-related deaths and injuries involving teenagers, agents with the Arizona Department of Liquor Licenses and Control are bringing the word to classrooms across the state.

Called "Kick Underage Drinking," the hourlong presentation offers a graphic look at the consequences of teens drinking alcohol, said Danny Thomas, a Flagstaff-based investigator with the liquor department.

"It shows the seriousness of underage drinking and the serious harm or death that can happen to them and others," Thomas said.

In Coconino County, underage drinking appears to be generally on the decline and is generally lower than the state average, according to a survey conducted by the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission.

Even so, substance abuse, in general (including illegal drugs and tobacco), for county teens remains higher than the state average, which has caused the United Way to make the reduction of teen substance abuse a priority in community conversations.

But, according to Flagstaff Police Department statistics, alcohol-related arrests involving juveniles rose between 2003 and 2004. In 2003, there were 170 juveniles arrested on liquor violations in the city. In 2004, that number rose to 236.

In total, 611 instances of illegal consumption were logged in 2003. That means police charged people under 21 with drinking alcohol, or charged adults for furnishing people under 21 with alcohol.

In 2004, that number jumped to 660, according to police records.

Thomas said he makes the presentation to middle, high school and underage college students several times a year.

The presentation includes not only graphic pictures of the consequences but also hits on statistics, liquor laws, effects on body, mind and development and more. A dramatic effect is desired, Thomas said.

"It's an effect that stays with them and will carry into their lives," Thomas said, adding that teachers express enthusiasm at the presentation and students, for the most part, pay rapt attention. "Because it's a matter between living and dying."



For more information, or if interested in booking a presentation, contact Investigator Danny Thomas at 556-2208, or e-mail danny.thomas@azliquor.gov.

Larry Hendricks can be reached at lhendricks@azdailysun.com or 556-2262.

On the Web: Mothers Against Drunk Driving, www.madd.org; Students Against Destructive Decisions, www.saddonline.com

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