

Dishing about drinking - Roslindale youth reach out to neighborhood groups

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Bulletin staff

Underage drinking is a difficult problem to deal with. It is more difficult to curb the problem when Roslindale youth are allowed to drink at someone's house or taking liquor from his or her own homes and parents are in denial about that.

But that will not dissuade Roslindale Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol from trying to solve the problem. Soon, members of the committee will begin meeting with neighborhood groups to get out the warnings about the dangers of underage drinking.

"The hardest part of what we are going to do is address the issues of apathy and denial about underage drinking," Cathy Slade, director of Healthy Roslindale, said. "If we found that people were getting it from liquor stores or barrooms, there are plenty of police initiatives to deal with those problems. Instead, they are getting (liquor) from other people."

What RMCA found was that youth were getting alcohol from "social sources."

"Which means anyone over 21 who legally buys and gives it to them," Slade said. "Say you're having a party and kids sneak away from the party or adults let them have drinks at a party," she added

as examples.

"This is just kids talking, it's not scientific. I think there are a lot of people who are 21 years old who buy for their friends who are 19 or 20," Slade said.

So RMCA has a goal of changing adults' attitudes about underage drinking to make them stricter about not letting youth, either their own kids or friend's, drink.

"It shouldn't be acceptable if your 16-, 17-year-old goes to a graduation party and other people are letting your kid drink," Slade said. Taking the car keys away so they don't drive under the influence is not enough, she said.

"Some parents feel, 'I can let my kid have a beer or a glass of wine every once in a while,'" Slade said, but no parent would allow their child to drink a six pack every night and they "wouldn't like it if their kid was at someone's house and they drank without the kids' parents knowing."

The issue, Slade said, is to figure out how to get adults, "anyone over 21, not to turn a blind eye to kids drinking and to not let them drink?" Some of RMCA's ideas are to launch a shock campaign, which could include showing people movies or videos and talking about the dangers of underage drinking. They also plan to relay information about how alcohol consumption can damage the brain of someone under 21. They also plan to get speakers, includ-

ing people who are in rehabilitation or from MADD or SADD.

There is also the issue of "social host liability," in which people can be liable for serving if they know the person is underage, Slade said, adding that if someone gets in a car accident after drinking, the host can be liable.

Slade said this issue has been in the spotlight lately after release of the book "Smashed."

"The girl was drinking a lot and her parents had no idea until she wrote the manuscripts and they read it," Slade said.

There are also social and health costs to society.

"How many times do people call in sick with hangover? How does alcohol affect health in general, as a cost to business?" Slade asked.

Getting the word out can be difficult because people are too busy to go out to meetings and they are concerned about their own issues and their children's schoolwork or after school activities. So, RMCA will bring the meetings to people in the community who are interested in having them.

"The young people are pretty excited. They are pretty proud of themselves," Slade said of the Rossi Reps who did research on underage drinking and conducted the survey. "They want to help the community and other young people. They would be happy to go to

any type of meeting or event and talk to people or pass out information."

Over the next few months, they have been invited to a few meetings, including Dale Street Crime Watch. They may also speak or give a PowerPoint presentation at school meetings, the Board of Trade, Citizen Schools and local police and Hyde Park cable shows.

The folks working on curbing underage drinking include five young people from the Rossie Reps: Will Romain, Julie Romain, Cassandra Amilcar, Jennifer Eliassaint and Jeff Noel; community members, including Marna Persechini, Kim O'Connell, Katie Mick, Eric Mick; Sgt. Herbert Langlois and Gerry McElmoyle, both of E-18; Dr. Stacey Breen of Roslindale; Merry Foxworth of Open Door Realty; Ellen Conway, a nurse at the Greater Roslindale Medical and Dental Center; **Amy Helburn; and Laurie Jo Wallace.**

"We'll just see if we can go to a few places in the next few months," Slade said.

If you are interested in having Roslindale Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol, a program of the Healthy Roslindale Coalition and **The Medical Foundation**, speak to your group, call Cathy Slade at Healy (617) 325-9022. The assessment should be up on the Healthy Roslindale website next week at www.healthyroslindalecoalition.com.

Community Center *continued from page 1*

seph Parrish, has been assigned to the center and said soccer programs and other activities are already in the works. Parrish will be coordinating the recreational programming for children ages 6 and up and he will also handle programming for seniors as well.

Cynthia Johnson, the cluster administrator of the facility, said she was happy about plans for the facility.

"I can only say that I'm a very pleased person," Johnson said. "We're happy that we can run new programming ... A lot of things are going to change around here."

Still, many frustrations surrounding the center remain between residents, the center's city-appointed staff and its non-profit board, which assists in setting up programming for the community.

During a community meeting at Roslindale Congregational Church on April 18, center board members Mark Rogovin and Chris Fallon expressed disappointment in the community and city's involvement in the center.

Pastor Dave Rozewski of the Congregational Church led the meeting, saying he realized there was a lot of disappointment in what the center has done in the

past and was looking towards the future.

"I'm hoping there're ways we can be involved with the board," Rozewski said.

Rogovin said the board is understaffed and it's tough pulling in resources from people in the community.

"It just doesn't happen," Rogovin said.

Fallon said the community's complaints are there but the community's involvement is not.

"We're perpetually frustrated because people don't attend (board meetings) ... It's the same three people (meeting) a month."

Fallon said the board shapes the core programming of the center, along with the center's staff.

Stephanie Romanos, a resi-

dent who attended the meeting, admitted she did not know anything about the community center and said she sends her children to play soccer in Jamaica Plain.

"When I look in the paper I don't see anything for my kids to do," she said.

Rogovin expressed the need for a stronger non-profit board of volunteers to help with the efforts at the community center. He also said he is disappointed by the city's communication with the board. He said he desires a board of 15-18 people and a secretary to log minutes of their meetings.

"You have to keep a paper trail and show a record of things you didn't get that you asked for (in order to get things done),"

Rogovin said.

Fallon also expressed the need for a stronger board.

"I think it's all about accountability and getting a large amount of people to do a little bit," he said.

Cathy Slade of Healthy Roslindale said that, in general, the Roslindale Community Center has to advertise their programs.

"They have to promote their programs so the community knows," Slade said. "They have to have brochures ... They have to advertise in the local papers ... if they have great programs and they're proud of them, let the people know about it."

The Roslindale Community Center Board meets the 3rd Wednesday of every month at the Roslindale Community Center at 6:30 p.m.

A meeting has been scheduled for Thursday, April 28 at 6:30 p.m., to be held in Roslindale Community Center's community room, for a preliminary discussion of new programming. City officials will discuss the upcoming process associated with the newly refurbished community center.

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