



Success Stories

Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws Program

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

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Long Beach, New York, Passes the First Social Host Ordinance in the State of New York

The passage of a social host ordinance has been one of the goals of the volunteer membership of Long Beach Medical Center's Coalition to Prevent Underage Drinking since 2002. It was not in response to a "single event," but rather the next logical step for the Coalition. The first change in a City Ordinance occurred in March 2001. Before then, when a youth received a summons (MIP), he or she sent the \$25.00 fine by mail. Afterwards, a youth receiving a summons for consumption or possession of an alcoholic beverage had to appear in court in person, attend a 3 week educational series held at the Medical Center, and return to court to "tell" the Judge what was learned. Only then is the charge dismissed. If a youth does not appear, a bench warrant is issued. The first summer, 158 youth were referred and 153 attended. This pattern has continued for the past 5 years.

Knowing that others also play a role in preventing underage drinking, the next logical step was to hold adults accountable for allowing underage drinking on their premises. The Coalition Coordinator, Judi Vining, and the Coalition Chair, Patricia Hincken, spearheaded the effort by promoting the concept that adults be held responsible for their part in underage drinking. Although there was opposition, the need and support for such an ordinance grew as information and facts from research and local data were highlighted. Using ordinances and statutes from other municipalities as examples, a subcommittee of the coalition drafted an ordinance and presented it to Council Member Robert Tepper, Esq., who volunteered to use his experience and drafted a subsequent social host ordinance. His subsequent draft was sent to the Corporation Counsel who approved the draft. A first public hearing was held on August 8, 2006, and a second on August 15, 2006. The vote, following the hearing,

was affirmative, and the ordinance became effective immediately. The penalty for violation of the ordinance is up to \$250 and/or 15 days in jail (judicial discretion). The ordinance refers to any "legal" adult who is "in charge" of the premises. An adult in the State of New York means anyone older than 16; others fall under the juvenile system.

Passage of the ordinance was through the collaborative efforts of the Long Beach Medical Center, the School District, the local newspaper (*The Long Beach Herald*), SADD, PTA, the Chamber of Commerce, and several Clergy. The media were also instrumental in "shedding light" on the issue. The regional newspaper, *Newsday*, highlighted the possible passage of the social host legislation on its front cover. Local TV and radio stations also attended the hearings and publicized the issue.

Ordinances often take time to pass, but the continued support of the Long Beach Police Department, the Long Beach Medical Center, Lt. Michael Tangney, Lt. Jack Radin, former Councilman Denis Kelly, Cliff Richner, and the Long Beach School District—all founding members of the Coalition—kept moving the agenda forward. Exciting developments have resulted since passage of this ordinance. The New York State Chiefs of Police have endorsed it. The ordinance has also been passed by other municipalities in the State of New York, and it has been adopted as the prototype by the New York State Drug Free Communities Environmental Task Force has adopted the Long Beach Ordinance.

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The views expressed in this document do not necessarily represent the views of the Office of Juvenile Justice for Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) or the Underage Drinking Enforcement Training Center (UDETC) and are solely of the author/source.

