



Success Stories

Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws Program

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

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Enforcement and Community collaboration results in a successful ordinance in Highland Park, Texas

Highland Park, Texas, a city within the city of Dallas, has enacted an ordinance that prohibits any adult from allowing youth to drink or possess alcohol with their knowledge and on property owned or rented by the adult. This ordinance was passed and enacted on February 27, 2006, by the Highland Park Town Council.

In January of 1999, Highland Park made national news when a large party was held in a warehouse with over 250 youth present. Adults were aware of this party and many other "house parties" that were being held under the knowledge and consent of adults. The Town of Highland Park Department of Public Safety made numerous arrests (average 150 each year) of youth at these parties and the Chief, Darrell Fant, decided to organize and take action. He had heard about a similar ordinance from a Success Story on Yamhill County, Oregon. Chief Fant decided that a similar ordinance in Highland Park could work in Highland Park.

The Alliance on Underage Drinking (ALoud) was formed by Chief Fant, US Attorney for the Northern District of Texas, Paul Coggins, and Dallas Police Chief, Ben Click. ALoud involved law enforcement agencies, schools, prevention groups, and elected officials. ALoud facilitated a Town Hall meeting to address the issue of underage drinking and out of this grew support for a Social Host ordinance that addressed adults providing a place for youth to gather to drink alcohol.

The ordinance itself was drafted, using as an example, a similar ordinance from Yamhill County, Oregon. Councilperson Helen Mann attended local court hearings of the youth charged during the house parties and was shocked at the reaction or

lack of reaction that many parents had to their child's involvement in breaking the law. Councilperson Mann provided the necessary push to get the ordinance moved through the adoption process by the Town Council. Other groups that were involved in the passage of this ordinance are MADD, Chemical Awareness Resource Education (CARE), and the Greater Dallas Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse).

Thus far, the Town of Highland Park has received this new ordinance with open arms and little to no resistance. Chief Fant stated, "Over the years, there's been a shift. About 95% of parents support proactive enforcement now." Chief Fant hopes that the ordinance provides opportunities for families to begin a dialogue of the dangers of underage drinking and that parents will "just be parents" and choose to be involved with their children.

Chief Fant hopes that neighboring areas within Northern Texas will model this ordinance and develop their own. Due to extensive media coverage in all of the Dallas area newspapers and television media, many surrounding communities near Highland Park requested a copy of the ordinance.

Now, the Town of Highland Park, Texas, has another tool for law enforcement to utilize that effectively addresses a component of underage drinking—adult provision of alcohol.

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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.



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