

## **READING COALITION AGAINST SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

### **LEADERSHIP**

***Board of Directors:*** The 21 member board met monthly and has made great strides in organizing to combat substance abuse. Officers for 2008 included Peter Hechenbleikner, President, Nancy-Linn Swain, Vice President, Patrick Schettini, Treasurer, and James Cormier, Secretary. Bill Carrick, Nuala Crehan, and Erik Kaloyanides resigned from their positions. Coalition leaders appointed the nominating committee to fill vacant slots as needed.

Sandra Goldstein, LISCW, replaced Amy Driscoll as the Northeast Metro Regional Vocational High School representative (spring 2008). Chris Caruso replaced David Michaud as the liaison for the School Committee (fall 2008). Courtney Ferrar, Student replaced Erin Ferrar (fall 2008). Amy Vendt, Burbank YMCA replaced Kathleen Walsh, Burbank YMCA (fall 2008). Dennis Collins, Parent/Member At Large and Lynn Dunn, RN, BSN, Parent/Member At Large were appointed to the Board of Directors in 2008.

Peter Hechenbleikner stepped down as President on October 2, 2008. Nancy-Linn Swain was elected President. Chief James Cormier was elected Vice President and Amy Vendt, Burbank YMCA was elected Secretary. Patrick Schettini will continue to serve as Treasurer. Board members that reached the end of their term were re-elected to three year terms.

***Board members roster as of 12/31/08:*** Nancy-Linn Swain, President, James Cormier, Vice President, Patrick Schettini, Treasurer, Amy Vendt, Secretary, Peter Hechenbleikner, Town Manager, Joseph Finigan, School Administration, Tom Zaya, School Health, Barbara Meade, Board of Health, Courtney Ferrar, Student, Ann Marie Baccari, Austin Prep, Richard Abate, Police, Pastor Pam Smith Paquette, Clergy Association, Steve Goldy, Board of Selectmen, Larry Berkowitz, Riverside Community Care, Paul Feeley, Media, Madeleine Chiappini, Student, Dennis Collins, Parent/Member At Large and Lynn Dunn, RN, BSN, Parent/Member At Large.

***Staff liaisons:*** Larry Ramdin, Health, John Feudo, Recreation, Erica McNamara, RCASA Director, and Connie DeBenedetto, RCASA Outreach Coordinator.

***Committees:*** The *Education Subcommittee* comprised of 12 members focused on expanding community education opportunities. This group hosted parent/teen dialogue nights for middle school and high school youth; a prescription drug awareness speaker for parents; and community dialogues. The *Youth Crew* comprised of 18-20 members focused on youth leadership, media campaign development, outreach, and prevention products.

***Personnel/Consultants:*** Erica McNamara was hired as Director in January 2008. Connie DeBenedetto was hired as Outreach Coordinator in September 2008. Consultants included: Cambridge Prevention Coalition (*Responsible Beverage Service Education*) - Filament Design Studio Inc. (*media campaign and website development*) - JBS Professional Services (*municipal and law enforcement training*) - Margaret Sallade (*grant writing, technical assistance and interim director*) - Marilyn Belmonte (*Generation Rx workshop*) - Northeast Center for Healthy Communities (*Evaluation Services*) - Youth (*dialogues, media campaign and underage operatives*).

### **FEDERAL DRUG FREE COMMUNITIES GRANT PROJECT**

***Assessment:*** RCASA leaders conducted a series of activities to assess local substance abuse concerns including hosting community dialogues; analyzing data including the 2007

Youth Risk Behavior Survey; gathering input from local youth and parents; conducting surveys with police and K-12 faculty; and scanning the substance abuse environment.

*Capacity:* RCASA leaders continued to build capacity through providing training opportunities for volunteers. Strong leadership was demonstrated by the 21- member Board of Directors, 12-member Education Subcommittee, and 20-member Youth Crew Subcommittee. Coalition membership increased from 76 to 258.

*Planning:* RCASA leaders refined the 5 year strategic plan and annual work plan with the input of stakeholders. Board leaders completed a powerful joint planning process rooted in the Healthy Communities philosophy.

*Implementation:* 1,874 outreach contacts were reached through workshops and trainings for stakeholders, parents, faculty, faith leaders, business leaders and youth on substance abuse prevention. 34 youth leaders were recruited for special projects including community dialogues and Youth Crew initiatives. 300 Burbank YMCA/RCASA Calendars featuring children's prevention messages were distributed to local families.

The Health Department, Walgreen's and RCASA established "Rx Round Up" a prescription disposal program in April 2008. Major projects were launched with the police, town, and school focused on environmental strategies to reduce substance abuse.

## **DRUG FREE COMMUNITIES EVALUATION**

The Northeast Center for Healthy Communities provided consultation services for RCASA to track both process and outcome measures. Evelyn Copeland, Project Officer from the U.S. SAMHSA Center for Substance Abuse Prevention visited Reading in September 2008 to conduct a site visit with staff and the Executive Board. RCASA met their targeted objectives and demonstrated considerable growth in fiscal year 2008.

**Goal 1:** Reduce substance abuse among youths and adults

**Results:**

- Monitored substance use and abuse indicators throughout the community
- Engaged 140 residents in RCASA community gatherings
- Provided training for Reading Public Schools on substance abuse including drug recognition/screening tools for school health nurses

**Goal 2:** Establish and strengthen collaboration

**Results:**

- 21 board members, 12 Education Subcommittee members, and 20 Youth Crew members contributed input at ongoing meetings and provided valuable leadership.
- Expansion of organizational structure to better reflect youth involvement
- Environmental scan results shared with Washington Park Planning Committee to inform redevelopment plans.

## **OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S GRANT PROJECT**

Youth View program components:

- 20 youth participated in the RCASA Youth Crew program on media campaign development and created 2 youth-targeted PSA messages on binge drinking and prescription drug use as proposed.

- Print ads featured in both local newspapers for 8 week run rotating marijuana, Rx, alcohol prevention and parent involvement.
- Facilitated special workshops on the health and legal consequences of Oxycontin and Heroin Abuse for 113 Reading Memorial High School Freshman students in December.

Access Denied Program Components:

- 417 people from the Reading Public Schools, Reading Police Department, local liquor licensees, Licensing Authority, coalition members, youth and residents participated in RCASA sponsored trainings in 2008.
- Reading Police Detectives conducted 5 compliance operations between May-December 2008. 3 violations referred to Licensing Authority. Pledge partners promoted through print ad when they reached 100% compliance.
- Full set of policy modifications compiled by Director, consultant and key stakeholders. Director presented draft to town manager. Working draft reviewed by Board of Selectman, Town Counsel, Chamber of Commerce and local licensees over a series of meetings and hearings.

### **OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL'S GRANT EVALUATION**

The Northeast Center for Healthy Communities served as the Evaluation Consultant for the project. Process data collected included meeting attendance, minutes, agendas, monthly reports, presentations, and press. 617 individuals participated in key surveys, evaluations or focus groups to broaden needs assessment data. The Office of the Attorney General's grant targeted 2 major goals.

**Goal 1:** By December 31, 2008, 20% of surveyed Reading youths ages twelve to eighteen will demonstrate an increased perception of harm or a shift in perception about use of both alcohol and prescription drug use as a result of a youth-led message campaign. **Results:** *By the end of December, 90% of youth felt it was a "moderate risk" and 9% felt it was a "great risk" to engage in binge drinking. 80% of youth felt it was a great risk and 20% felt it was a moderate risk to use prescription drugs without a doctor's order.*

**Goal 2:** By December 31, 2008, underage access to alcohol is significantly reduced by implementing a comprehensive monitoring and enforcement program to ensure 90% of licensees comply with underage drinking laws. **Results:** *By the end of December, 100% of licensees were compliant.*

Key program components will be sustained after the grant award period including:

- Reading Public Schools staff will utilize the skills garnered in training to advance student support initiatives.
- RCASA obtained additional grant sources to fund the Youth Crew consultants. Two grants of \$10,000 each were raised to sustain and expand their work in 2009.
- The media messages developed during the grant period will be utilized for the next two years with slight modifications to shift community norms.
- The Police Department with assistance from RCASA sought additional grant sources to fund compliance surveys. A grant was awarded totaling \$5,000 to fund enforcement work.

- The RCASA Policy Action Team will continue to meet regularly to prioritize, review and recommend specific policies to the Board of Selectmen Two major reviews are anticipated in February and April.
- RCASA will support town efforts to continue the 21 Proof Server/Seller Training Program in 2009.

**FINANCIAL**

*Grants under management*

<b>Funder:</b>	<b>Project:</b>	<b>Amount:</b>	<b>Year(s)</b>
U.S. White House Office of National Drug Control Policy/ SAMHSA CSAP	Drug Free Communities	\$100,000	10/07-9/12
Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General	Environmental Strategies for Substance Abuse Prevention	\$71,966.00	12/07- 12/08 (1 year only)
The Medical Foundation	a. Healthy Communities Planning Grant  b. Healthy Communities Implementation Grant  c. Mass Youth Against Tobacco Grant	\$10,000 per project	a. 10/07-9/08 (1 year only)  b. 10/08-9/09  c. 11/08- 5/09

*Match resources*

Match funds committed to RCASA projects totaled \$155,307 from town, school and police departments. These resources included the provision of office and meeting space, matrix supervision, and financial oversight.

**PUBLIC RELATIONS**

The RCASA Youth Newsletter & Coalition Quarterly Newsletter was released through Constant Contact to 258 members. Staff prepared 23 Press Releases. Local newspapers published 33 RCASA news articles. Reading Community TV aired two RCASA event productions (“Do you see what I see?” and “Do you hear what I hear?”) and 2 public service announcements (“Afterschool” and “Wasn’t that fun?”)

**MILESTONES**

Key milestones included establishing the first youth leadership crew for the coalition; enhanced community education and police enforcement to reduce minors’ access to alcohol; core policy modifications on liquor licensing; and improved understanding amongst youth, parents and residents of the issues associated with binge drinking and Rx abuse in Reading.