

Milford tackles underage drinking

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MILFORD — The city's Youth Services Network is inviting parents to attend a Town Hall-style meeting to discuss underage drinking and recent legislation that fines parents for providing alcohol to minors.

The forum will be held Nov. 2 from 7 to 9 p.m. at City Hall and will include a panel discussion for parents about underage drinking, as well as a question-and-answer session, said Joan Politi, a member of the network and president of Milford's Promise.

"We wanted to broaden the network's activities and do something that could benefit the entire community," Politi said, adding that the network was established two years ago as a forum for youth-service providers to collaborate and share information. "Hosting a town meeting like this is something our group plans on doing a lot more of in the future."

She added that town meetings are the perfect venue to discuss issues facing the community, such as underage drinking and recent legislation that makes it illegal for an adult to knowingly allow a minor to possess alcohol on private property. The law, which takes effect Oct. 1, allows for fines of up to \$500 and up to one year in prison for repeated offenses.

"The law was designed to close a loophole in state law," said John Suchy, director of the state Department of Consumer Protection's Liquor Control Division.

Suchy is among several experts who will participate in the panel discussion. Others planning to attend include a trauma nurse from Yale-New Haven Hospital, a health educator from the schools, a representative of the Police Department and two local students.

"We're very pleased that the Milford community invited us to attend this event," Suchy said. "Any time a community partners education and enforcement is a formula for success."

Karen Schur, executive director of the young parent program at Milford Hospital and a member of the network, said another town meeting may be planned for May to discuss sexual health. May is teenage pregnancy prevention month, she added.

"The town meeting is a great forum to provide more education and awareness for parents," she said. "Hopefully, this will be the beginning of a positive dialogue."

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