

## **CONNECTICUT AND UNDERAGE DRINKING: PARTNERING FOR PREVENTION**

### **Commissioner Thomas A. Kirk, Jr., Ph.D., Department of Mental Health & Addiction Services**

Let me give you a sense of what Connecticut is like in terms of its population and other aspects of who we are in Connecticut. Relatively small state – about 3 ½ million people – 169 cities and towns in Connecticut. Probably among the highest in the country, at least in the top three in terms of per capita income – but do not be deceived by that. We have some of the poorest towns and localities within the nation.

### **Jane Ungemack, Dr., P.H., Assistant Professor, UCONN School of Medicine**

About 32% of Connecticut 12-20 year olds drink. The 32% of underage drinkers translates to about 134,000 youth.

### **Thomas Aviles, Student, Waterbury Youth Services**

You'll find kids that drink in every school that you will go to. It's not just my school and it's not just anybody else's.

### **Constance Hunter, Parent, Waterbury Youth Services**

I believe parents are not educated about how alcohol affects young minds.

### **Luanelly Iglesias, Parent, Waterbury Youth Services**

And many times they don't come to educational programs because they don't have transportation and because probably they don't have daycare where they can bring their children and be able to sit, listen and get the education that they need.

### **Rachel R. Harrison, Student, Waterbury Youth Services**

I talk to my parents weekly. My parents and I have very good communication which is something I know that a lot of families lack.

### **Robert T. Milano, Police Chief, Torrington Police Department**

The enticement for kids that are under 21 to drink is very strong with the peer pressure. Pressures of dorm life on college campuses and they're not in high school. That has always been considered to be a right of passage but along with that comes a lot of tragedy attached with this right of passage.

### **Walter B. Bernstein, Ed.D., Vice President for Student Affairs, Western Connecticut State University**

At Western we definitely think that the administrators play a key role in de-emphasizing the use of alcohol on the campus. We have gone to great lengths through our alcohol policy, to frankly, de-emphasize the use of it.

**Sharon Guck, M.P.H., Coordinator, Substance Abuse Prevention Program, Western Connecticut State University**

A lot of students come in and their perceptions are off. They'll come in and they'll say "so I've had a DUI, I got kicked out of the prom, I spent X amount of money my discretionary income on alcohol, I'm drunk three nights a week." They might not list that or they may not, in their consciousness, see that yet as the negative consequences of alcohol use and it's really the responsibility of this office to reframe that.

**Rafaele Perri, Student President, BACCHUS Student Club, Western Connecticut State University**

Know what's normal – know that at WestConn we have a social norms campaign that says that 65% of students at Western CT State University drink five or less drinks a week and that's what's normal.

**Walter B. Bernstein, Ed.D., Vice President for Student Affairs, Western Connecticut State University**

A lot of our programming and a lot of the education has been around how do you extricate yourself from situations that you might be in. There is a pretty extensive protocol that the students have to go through when they do get in trouble but it is basically an education process.

**Roy D. Hannon, General Manager, The Cork Fine Wine & Spirits**

What we do to try and combat underage drinking is we put a sign on the door that says "If you're not of legal drinking age, if you're under the age of 21, you are not allowed in the store". We also card everyone in the store who looks under the age of 40 and that includes everyone in a group. To further that we've also purchased a machine that physically takes the license, then we scan it into it, and it will tell us first of all, if it is a legitimate ID and then if that person is of age to purchase alcohol.

**Kevin Pettit, Prevention Program Director, McCall Foundation**

We had over 40 merchants attend our meeting for responsibility and we've also had over 40 merchants attending our merchant education sessions where they're teaching the merchants to not sell to minors. So we're getting buy-in from the merchants, we're getting lower failure rates on our compliance checks.

**Robert T. Milano, Police Chief, Torrington Police Department**

The most serious aspect of underage drinking that we deal with, having done studies on this under previous grants, is a third party transfer. What I mean by that is where underage individuals will have somebody that is of age go into a package store for them, by it legally and then come out and around the corner in the package store parking lot, deliver to a minor.

We deal with that by spot checks, we've staked out parking lots, we've followed up on complaints and determined if it was happening and we make arrests.

**James Crean, Detective, Torrington Police Department**

As far as the underage drinking, as far as the Task Force, with us being out there, I think is very important especially with our youth now a days, the minors are drinking while they're behind the wheels, especially when they're new drivers and we need to stop that. So as far as the underage drinking there is a serious problem here as in all communities and it needs to be addressed. I think we're doing a pretty good job of it and education of the kids even in the school.

**Caryn Olcik, Project Coordinator, Strategic Prevention Framework, Waterbury Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking**

We are training youth to be leaders, to be in charge of projects and to talk to the community about it– talk to business owners, talk to organizations. These young people are the experts about teenagers. Adults are not the experts about teenagers. We've all been teenagers – the times are very different.

**Daniel Hunter, Student, Waterbury Youth Services**

I believe that everybody should get involved to stop underage drinking because everybody thinks that it can't happen to them and it could.

**Adipel Lopez, Student, Waterbury Youth Services**

I got involved because I want the community to take notice that there is youth out there that really want other youth to see that we're leaders and that we want to reduce the number of accidents and the underage drinking and show other youth that there is other things to do than just drink.

**Caryn Olcik, Project Coordinator, Strategic Prevention Framework, Waterbury Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking**

The youth participate and support MADD sponsored projects. One of these is what is called a Tie a Red Ribbon On project or campaign. It is to bring awareness to the community in a very visual way of tying a red ribbon on a vehicle to think about before you get in your automobile “have you been drinking, I shouldn't drive, I should call someone”.

**Kevin Pettit, Prevention Program Director, McCall Foundation**

We have a lot of support on our coalition – law enforcement, school administrators, parents, youth and youth service bureaus.

**Walter B. Bernstein, Ed.D., Vice President for Student Affairs, Western Connecticut State University**

We also think that others have a role to play in spreading the word that alcohol is not key to having fun or success on the college campus and that includes the faculty, that includes staff and ultimately students themselves.

**Sharon Guck, M.P.H., Coordinator, Substance Abuse Prevention Program, Western Connecticut State University**

Everybody has their own part to play in that. We can enforce our laws and our policies on campus but if students can walk off campus and drink at a local bar, that's just going to exacerbate the issue. Everybody really needs to work in collaboration and step up to the plate to take ownership of what they can do to help prevent underage drinking.

**Roy D. Hannon, General Manager, The Cork Fine Wine & Spirits**

There seems to be a bit of a stigma attached to liquor stores thinking that all liquor stores are out there trying to sell because they need to make money which is definitely not the case. There is absolutely no necessity or reason for anyone to be selling to anyone who is underage. It is easier for the package store owner, or the person running the register, to be at the point where prevention starts which is what we all strive to do.

**Thomas Aviles, Student, Waterbury Youth Services**

The advice I would give to somebody is just look forward – for them to look towards their future.

**Adipel Lopez, Student, Waterbury Youth Services**

Not only does it affect you when you're around other people or it brings a lot of consequences, but when you get older there's a lot of consequences that can come from that and I don't want that to happen to me because I want to have a successful future.

**Rachel R. Harrison, Student, Waterbury Youth Services**

I am a teenager and I want to live like that – I don't want to have to have responsibilities. I'd like to take drinking right out of the equation.