

Grant to help anti-substance abuse group target youth

Published: Sunday, 27 August 2017 22:23

STAFF WRITER

BRISTOL - Wolcott Citizens Against Substance Abuse received a grant of \$2,000 to implement a social marketing campaign to spread awareness about the dangers of underage drinking.

Wolcott CASA targets youth ages 12 - 17 and works to reduce substance abuse. The organization uses collaboration, education, awareness and community action to promote wellness in the community.

The grant was awarded to CASA by the Bristol Savings Bank Fund at the Main Street Community Foundation during a small ceremony at the CASA office, which is located at Wolcott High School.

Susan Sadecki, President and CEO of the Main Street Community Foundation, explained the grant is part of the organization's annual spring-grant cycle, which CASA applied for.

The spring-grant cycle invited nonprofits from Bristol, Burlington, Plainville, Plymouth, Southington and Wolcott to apply for grants from the community foundation.

"It's a competitive grant cycle and the awardees are selected by a distribution committee, which is made up of volunteers from all six communities we serve," she said.

Each applicant meets with members of the distribution committee, Sadecki explained, then as a group it decides which applicants will receive the grants.

This is the first time CASA has received a grant from the community foundation, Sadecki said. She added that Wolcott has a federal drug-free grant, but "it doesn't cover all that CASA wants to do in the community."

"The grant will help to improve the organization's social media campaign that targets the dangers of underage drinking," she said. "The thing I love about CASA is that it is a very diverse group of people from the community."

The social media campaign will include handouts, posters, public service announcements, a community-wide forum and school presentations. Another part of the campaign is an Asset Mascot, which is an eagle that will display positive messages, interact with youth and spread information about the dangers of underage drinking.

"Prevention efforts have positive effects not only on individuals, but on the community as a whole," said Katie Ciarlo, president of CASA. "We strive to maintain public awareness of the truth and dangers of



substance abuse.

“All members of CASA will be involved in the campaign, especially the youth members. They will help design the materials to ensure that their peers will find them informational and interesting.

“In fact, we are partnering with 12 sectors of the community, including schools, law enforcement, businesses, churches, media, parents and youth. This is a true community-wide effort to improve youth wellness.”

The parents and guardians of students in middle and high school will be targeted, so that information regarding the Connecticut Social Hosting Law and the legal issues that surround serving alcohol to minors can be taught. CASA also works to remind parents that their children often mimic their behavior.

“At the end of the day, we hope to increase awareness and knowledge of the dangers of alcohol, increase participation in CASA and increase the number of people who do not use alcohol,” Ciarlo added.

Lorenzo Burgio can be reached at lbugio@centralctcommunications.com or at 860-584-0501 ext 5088.