



Health & Community Services

San Juan County

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San Juan Island receives funding to reduce underage drinking

San Juan Island School District has been selected to receive a Prevention Intervention Specialist to coordinate Project SUCCESS to prevent and reduce youth alcohol and other drug use, and create a healthier and safer community environment through continuing to work with the San Juan Island Prevention Coalition. The support from the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery (DBHR) includes funding for training, technical assistance, and community and school-based prevention services. San Juan County Health and Community Services is collaborating with the Northwest Educational Services District (NWESD) in implementing the prevention initiative.

The NWESD is managing the school-based services with SJISD, while San Juan County Health and Community Services and San Juan Island Prevention Coalition are the coordinating community based work. San Juan Island Prevention Coalition is in its ninth year as a Drug Free Community Support Program grantee supported by a grant from the Office of National Drug Control and Policy. "SJIPC is proud to work collaboratively with the state, NWESD and the school district to place a Prevention Intervention Specialist in the school system to work directly with the students," said Brad Fincher, Chair of the coalition.

San Juan Island is one of 52 communities statewide participating in the Prevention Redesign Initiative (PRI), funded by the state Department of Social and Health Services' DBHR. PRI supports new or existing coalitions in partnering with parents, youth, educators, health professionals, law enforcement, faith leaders, and local government. San Juan Island Prevention Coalition will continue to identify their highest prevention needs, plan and implement evidence-based strategies, leverage local resources and evaluate the impact of selected programs.

"Our goal in redesigning and targeting our state prevention services is to leverage enough resources in high-need communities to achieve greater reductions in substance abuse and the harm it causes," said Chris Imhoff, DBHR's Director. "Community leaders are prepared to use these resources to help young people make healthy choices and succeed," added Imhoff.

PRI's primary goals are to reduce underage drinking among 8th and 10th graders, improve academic performance, and reduce juvenile crime. Alcohol abuse injures and kills more young people than all other drugs combined. The 2012 Washington State Healthy Youth Survey found that prevention efforts are working to reduce teen drinking, however, more than 115,000 youth said they drank in past 30 days.

Because the teen brain is still developing, alcohol use during this time can permanently damage learning and memory, and impairs judgment and impulse control. This puts teens at greater risk for serious injuries and death.

"A number of factors were considered in selecting San Juan Island for services," said Cynthia Stark-Wickman, Prevention Coordinator for San Juan County Health and Community Services. "These included underage drinking, self-reported drinking and driving, self-reported truancy, and self-reported fighting as key risk factors as well as successes in the coalition's work in the community in raising the perception of harm of alcohol use by teens and providing parents with skills for working with their teens. These factors show that San Juan Island is ready to benefit from prevention services. DBHR's evaluation team profiled each school district community in the state, and ranked the districts in each county based on 26 indicators including alcohol use by youth in grades 6, 8, and 10. Based on the state compiled community profile data, SJISD was indicated as the highest need community in San Juan County.

The San Juan Island Prevention Coalition, founded in 2003, will continue planning and implementing a variety of strategies and actions for reducing underage drinking and substance abuse. The Prevention Intervention Specialist services will begin in September at Friday Harbor Middle School. The coalition encourages community members to join the coalition to help plan and support programs. More information about the coalition can be found at www.sjipc.org

State and county data from the Washington State Healthy Youth Survey is available at www.AskHYS.net. Information and tips for parents for preventing underage drinking can be found at www.StartTalkingNow.org.

For information about joining the San Juan Island Prevention Coalition, contact Cynthia at prevention@centurytel.net or call 378-9683.



Prevention Redesign Initiative (PRI) Collaborators gather after the June coalition meeting: Cynthia Stark-Wickman, San Juan County Health and Community Services Prevention Coordinator with Wendy Thomas, Prevention Coordinator for the Northwest Education Services District, Jodie DesBiens, Director, NWESD Prevention Center, and Brad Fincher, Chair, San Juan Island Prevention Coalition

Photo Contributed by Debbi Fincher, SJIPC Media Specialist