**Strategy Successes - Van Buren SAFE Coalition**

<http://www.vbsafecoalition.com/>

The Van Buren County Safe Coalition is a Drug Free Communities grantee and is located in Van Buren County. They work with youth and adults to implement environmental strategies related to substance abuse in their county.

The Van Buren County SAFE Coalition has been able to implement a variety of environmental strategies over the course of the last 10 years that they feel have been the key to their success in the community. As a result of their success, they have seen a reduction in underage drinking numbers. Their 12th grade alcohol use rates went from 53% in 2005 to 25% in 2012. Their 12th grade tobacco use rates went from 36% in 2005 to 15% in 2012.

Strategy work

The coalition has worked with local merchants to offer a worksite responsible beverage server training, coupled with that the coalition worked with the law enforcement to implement semi-annual compliance checks of all businesses that sell alcohol to ensure they are using what is learned in the training.

The law enforcement developed a compliance check policy that streamlined the way the checks were done ensuring consistency across the county and for each check. This policy also spelled out the fine that was administered to the business based on if they had completed a training or not, if the business had completed the training they did not receive administrative sanctions; this encouraged almost all of the businesses in the county to train their employees.

The coalition worked to pass a keg registration ordinance in the county and then assisted with the passage of the same law at the state level. This law and ordinance greatly decreased the availability of large sums of alcohol for teens.

The coalition worked with both school districts in the county to revise and strengthen their code of conduct policy- this increased the infractions to include photos of substance use on social media and also covered more of the student body and not just those involved in athletics.

A Youth Leadership Council group has evolved over the course of the last 10 years to now include over 100 youth who are also fighting against substance abuse in the county, they are involved in many of these initiatives in their schools and community and even at the state level. Most recently in the last year the coalition was a part of a statewide movement to pass a social host law in the state of Iowa. Two youth from the Van Buren YLC group spoke at a Day on the Hill event at the state capitol, they spoke about the dangers of underage drinking, where their peers are able to access alcohol and how reducing the availability of alcohol would make their community and state a safer place to live.

The Van Buren County SAFE Coalition has played a key role in passing a tobacco free park policy at all of the ball diamonds in Van Buren County. This ensures that there is no smoking at the diamonds during youth sporting events. The Youth also advocated for a smoke free city park in Keosauqua- they did this by doing a city park cleanup and presented their findings to the city council for the passage of a policy. They did the same type of event at the Villages of Van Buren Welcome Center. This area is now smoke free and has signs and receptacles before you get to the area. The SAFE Coalition has also worked with both school districts to help enhance and enforce the tobacco policies on both school grounds. They have provided additional signage, worked to spread the word about the policies and enhanced the policies to include chewing tobacco and other nicotine products along with smoking. The YLC members and the SAFE Coalition also advocated for the passage of the smoke free air act in the state of Iowa, after this was passed the coalition worked to help distribute signage and get the word out about the new law in the state.

The coalition has also started building a relationships with their larger industries in the community to provide assistance and support in revising, updating or implementing Drug Free Worksite Policies. They have worked with one over the last year to implement a new comprehensive policy and are working with a second to do something similar.

For more information about the Van Buren County SAFE Coalition, you can contact Heidi Bainbridge at heidi.bainbridge@van-burencsd.org