

Teen AA honors FH Coalition

The Fountain Hills Coalition received the 2013 Community Coalition Award from Teen Addiction Anonymous at a recent banquet.

Each year TAA conducts its Hope Awards Banquet and offers an honorary award of recognition to a community that exemplifies extraordinary effort and commitment to youths, and is implementing the Teen AA program.

In presenting the award, William Brown, COO of Teen Addiction Anonymous, singled out the Fountain Hills Coalition for its collaborative efforts in uniting various sectors to combat underage drinking and drug use in Fountain Hills.

At a recent coalition sector meeting, Brown commented, "We're proud to be a part of the Fountain Hills Coalition."

"When you have a group such as this, you can look for some magnificent things to happen."

"This is the most engaged and diverse group we've seen."

"A coalition can make a bigger difference than one individual."

Susan Rothery co-founder and CEO of TAA, said the program is growing across the country and inquiries are even coming from other countries.

"I encourage you to think in bigger terms," Rothery told the coalition.

"We're all on the same page. You truly are invested in children."

Paula Goblet, nurse for the Fountain Hills Unified School District, is on TAA's advisory council.

She also serves as one of the facilitators for the TAA program, which was recently launched at Fountain Hills High School.

"We started with two students at our first meeting, and at our fourth meeting we had 12," Goblet said. "The kids who are coming are buying into it. We told them this is something they could own. The buy-in was almost immediate."

"They found something that's their own, this is all about them."

Teen AA is the first 12-step program created by, with and for teens. It is described as an educational program empowering teens to support their peers.

Typical issues include poor attendance, "putting oneself down," substance abuse, uncontrollable anger, as well as eating issues, shopping challenges and sex addictions.

It provides an opportunity and support as teens deal with whatever is creating barriers to them maximizing their personal success in school, home and in "life."

No one discloses their personal addiction. Teens found that they wanted the focus to be about healing instead of dwelling on negative behavior or substance abuse.

Awards banquet

Coalition board member Dwight Johnson accepted the award Jan. 18 on behalf of the group.

Johnson outlined the coalition's mission and highlighted one successful program it launched here – the Text-A-Tip program.

Johnson also introduced many of the coalition sector leaders and others who were in attendance from Fountain Hills at the Scottsdale banquet.

He brought David Ellefson along with him on stage, the bass player for Megadeth.

Ellefson lives in the Valley and described his addictions and how he overcame them through a 12-step program.

Ellefson said he fully supported the tenets of Teen Addiction Anonymous and would be willing to help where he could.

At the earlier coalition meeting, Town Prosecutor Mark Iacovino was present, along with David Gallagher, who runs Arizona Addiction Treatment Programs, discussing how TAA could be wrapped into court referrals for juveniles who are caught for minor consumption and other minor

drug crimes.

"Some kids need to be told their behavior is inappropriate and ordered to get help," Iacovino said.

"I'm excited about TAA starting here. It is one more tool in our arsenal."

"Many of the juvenile cases we see involved substance abuse issues..."

"With kids, you still have an opportunity to really make a change in someone's life."

Gallagher added, "In

my 30 years in this field, I haven't seen AA work in schools."

"But it will work here because of this group."

The Fountain Hills-based coalition is led by Carole Groux, executive director, and is grounded by a board of directors consisting of Bob Ditta, Mike Scharnow, Doug Hebert and Johnson.

Maria Perreault is the "on the ground" manager of The Coalition.

Prescription drugs scrutinized Initiative may launch here

The Fountain Hills Coalition will explore the possibility of launching an initiative here to help combat the abuse of prescription drugs.

The coalition recently heard a presentation from Shelly Mowrey, who worked on such a pilot program in Yavapai, Pinal and Graham/Greenlee counties.

The initiative has five key efforts:

1. Reducing illicit acquisition and diversion of prescription medications.

2. Educating prescribers and pharmacists about best practices for controlled substances.

3. Enhancing prescription drug practice and policies in law enforcement.

4. Increasing public awareness about the risks of prescription drug misuse.

5. Building a resilience in children and adults.

Called the "Arizona Prescription Drug Misuse and Abuse Initiative," the program won a 2013 award from the National Criminal Justice Association for its success.

In about a year's time, the initiative was responsible for the collection of more than 5,000 pounds of unused prescriptions, the education of nearly 9,000 Arizonans and a total media reach of more than 395,000 people.

Additionally, registration by pharmacists and doctors in the state's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program had increased 137 percent and 112 percent, respectively, across all three pilot counties.

"Fewer pills in a community means less pills available for illegal use," Mowrey told the coalition.

"We are looking to roll this out in Maricopa County and throughout the

The Fountain Hills Coalition has more than 40 members who work collectively on productive programs for the community's children with an emphasis on reducing substance abuse.

Its mission statement is: Through community-wide collaboration, Fountain Hills will work together to reduce substance abuse among youth ages 12-18, and over time, among adults."

state."

Much of the program centers around educating homeowners on how to use and store their medications and working with doctors to have them participate in the drug monitoring program.

"Prevention sometimes is so hard to see, but this is something concrete," Mowrey said.

She also quickly reviewed the potential for total marijuana legalization in Arizona and what steps can be taken on the local level to help prevent that from happening.

Some of the suggestions were:

*Town Council adopt a resolution opposing the legalization of marijuana.

*Policy committee to examine any legalization bills to see what actions cities and town can take to protect citizens and children.

*Community and parent awareness presentations.



Fountain Hills Coalition Board Member Dwight Johnson, left, accepted the award from Teen Addiction Anonymous at a recent fundraising banquet. David Ellefson, bassist and co-founder of Megadeth, right, spoke at the event, throwing his support to TAA and other 12-step programs.



Fountain Hills School Board Member Dr. C.T. Wright, right, greeted State Schools Superintendent John Huppenthal, left, along with Dr. Don Covey, county school superintendent, at the event. Huppenthal was given the 2013 Hope Award by TAA.