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The Fort's Fiesta



Times photo by Bob Burns

Members of the Fort McDowell royalty wave from the community float during the Fiesta Bowl Parade presented by the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation in Phoenix on Saturday. See additional pictures on Page 14A.

*Drug usage decreasing among teens

Big drop found in alcohol use

By Michael Scharnow
Times Editor

The statistics are encouraging, according to Fountain Hills Coalition Executive Director Carole Groux, that certain drug-related trends among local students are improving.

According to an Arizona Youth Survey taken at Fountain Hills High School, self-reported "30-day substance use" is down among students when compared to a previous survey.

When examining grades 10 and 12, alcohol usage is under 35 percent in 2012 when compared to 45 percent in 2010, use of cigarettes has dropped from 15 percent to 13 percent and marijuana 30-day use has dropped from 22 percent to 21 percent in the two-year period.

"The usage rates are overall significantly down from 2010 for alcohol," Groux said.

"And this is really important since we as a coalition have been targeting alcohol usage as our primary local issue to address this past year."

Groux believes that awareness of the coalition, a crackdown by the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office on teenage house parties and the anonymous Text-A-Tip program have all combined to lower the alcohol usage rate among teens.

Groux said four core measures are typically looked at to determine if local drug prevention attempts are effective.

Those are average age of onset, past 30-day use (even once), perception of risk and

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Town fights sales tax idea

Construction revenue would drop

By Bob Burns
Times Reporter

The Town of Fountain Hills stands to be a big loser if the Arizona Legislature accepts a recommendation to change how sales tax for construction projects is collected.

Since incorporation, sales taxes collected on construction activities have been a key source of revenue for the town.

Only with the onset of the Great Recession did

those construction revenues become less of a factor in the town budget, and significant cuts to staff and spending have reflected that.

As recently as the 2007-08 fiscal year the town collected more than \$2 million in construction sales taxes. That number has dwindled to about \$600,000 for the 2011-12 fiscal year, but still the town's construction sales tax revenue has totaled roughly \$1.7 million over the past three fiscal years.

There are signs the construction industry is ready to rebound, which could help rejuvenate the town's anemic budget. That is, however, unless a proposal by a governor's task force is implemented.

A task force established by Governor Jan Brewer in 2012 was charged with transaction privilege tax reform and simplification. "Transaction privilege tax" is the official name for sales taxes.

Among the recommendations of the task force, which released its report in mid-December, is a proposal

to change construction sales tax collection to the point of sale of the materials.

While Fountain Hills has been among the busier locales for new construction activity in the past few decades, almost none of the materials for that activity have been purchased in the community.

Arizona law has allowed that sales tax for construction is based on a percentage of the cost to the property owner, not the cost of the materials purchased.

Contractors have been exempt from paying sales tax at the point of sale.

That, along with a number of other factors, has created a sales tax system that is among the most com-

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New recycling incentives?

Republic Services will outline a new proposal for a recycling rewards program for residential trash customers when the Town Council meets Thursday.

In a letter to town Environmental Planner Raymond Rees, Chris Coyle, general manager for Republic Services, Phoenix, said the new proposal summarizes the firm's intention to comply with the town's request to deliver a process for non-profit donations in the recycling rewards program.

"Our drive to deliver on this promise has also resulted in bringing Fountain Hills an overall enhanced program called 'My Republic Rewards,'" Coyle said.

Recyclebank, Republic's recycling rewards program partner, has been unable to provide a program that allows customers to divert their reward points for recycling to non-profit organizations in town.

This was a concern when the town first moved to the

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*Drugs

(cont. from page 1A)

perception of parental disapproval.

There is an inverse correlation between perceived risk and usage rates — when perceived risk goes up, usage rates go down.

“The great news is that in almost every single category of perceived risk or parent or peer disapproval, the numbers look better for 2012 than they did in 2010,” Groux said.

“The overarching exception is marijuana among 12th grade students.”

She said the perceived parental and peer disapproval and perceived risk are down for that grade.

“I believe personally that this has everything to do with the passing of ‘medical’ marijuana in Arizona,” Groux said.

“But it’s still amazing to me that the rest of the numbers are in the favor of increased perception of risk.

“While it does take three points to identify a trend, I believe we can be cautiously optimistic that the numbers seem to be going in the right direction.”

Overall, Fountain Hills is lower than Arizona averages in alcohol and cigarettes and less than 1 percent higher in marijuana, according to survey data.

However, Groux also noted that Fountain Hills could be considered a “rural” setting when looking at urban schools, and national research has suggested that a rural town can have on average a 5 percent higher substance use rate.

“So the bottom line is that we still have work to do,” she said.

Fountain Hills Unified School District Superintendent Tom Lawrence is keenly aware of what lies ahead, having been principal at both FHHS and FHMS.

He had high praise for the coalition, his building principals and the Maricopa County Sheriff’s Office for their continuing efforts in battling drug and alcohol usage among teens.

“I, too, am encouraged by these trends,” Lawrence said. “We have been working hard at the middle and high schools to get the message out that there is zero tolerance for drug and alcohol.

“These efforts will continue into the new semester, as we look ahead to

spring break, prom and graduation.”

Groux said the coalition will proceed in working to change the perceived “norm” that drinking and smoking are acceptable rites of passage for young adults.

Statewide

According to the statewide survey that included more than 60,000 students, more than one-third of Arizona youths report engaging in some type of substance use in the past 30 days.

Besides substance abuse, the survey also touched upon such risky behaviors as bullying, violence and gambling.

The 2012 survey was administered in each of Arizona’s 15 counties representing 349 schools for a total sample of 62,817 valid survey respondents statewide.

Statewide, the percentages of students reporting any use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs listed in the survey in their lifetimes decreased in each category from 2010 to 2012, with the exception of steroids, which did not change.

Questions about synthetic drugs such as bath salts and spice were introduced in the 2012 study, and nearly 10 percent of students reported use in their lifetime.

Students reporting the use of marijuana and/or prescription drugs reported obtaining them from friends more than any other source listed in the survey.

Alcohol (28.1 percent) continues to be the substance reportedly used by the largest percentage of youths in the 30 days prior to completing the survey, although that total continues to decrease since reaching a recent high in 2006 (34.4 percent).

The percentage of students in all three grades who admit to having consumed alcohol at least once in their lifetime was nearly 52 percent, a decrease from about 62 percent in 2006.

Students obtain alcohol from parties more than any other source.

Groux said the coalition will continue its efforts at the middle school level as well, since typically the onset of alcohol and drug usage occurs in the middle school years.

“If we can reach the middle school students, hopefully those trends will carry over into the high school,” Groux said.

“We are already seeing evidence of that with the lower grades at the high school.”