

Drug coalition

*More talk about social hosting laws

By Michael Scharnow
Times Editor

The Fountain Hills Youth Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition plans to conduct a symposium on underage drinking in the fall.

Part of the symposium will include a discussion of existing Arizona laws that can be used against teens for drinking and against parents for hosting underage parties.

"Many parents are unaware of the legal consequences of underage drinking and hosting parties," said Dwight Johnson, who is helping organize the symposium for the coalition.

While the Town of Fountain Hills is exploring the possibility of enacting a

social hosting ordinance, there are some basic Arizona statutes that can be invoked for such circumstances.

Tait Elkie, a local attorney who takes his seat on the Town Council next week, gave a presentation at last week's coalition meeting.

Elkie said parents can be cited for such things as furnishing alcohol to minors, contributing to the delinquency of a minor and hosting a party where minors are drinking.

"We have laws in place to address many of the concerns we have here," Elkie said. "You can go after parents hosting parties."

Still, Sheriff's Lt. Brian Jakowicz said later in the meeting that often times issuing citations to parents for hosting underage par-

ties can be difficult.

There is a clause in the existing statute concerning "knowingly" supplying alcohol and hosting the party. He said it is easy for everyone at a party to decline stating where the alcohol was obtained.

"That's our sticking point," he said. "It can leave us short."

"A social hosting ordinance in Fountain Hills could help us in certain situations."

Carole Groux, coalition director, said assessments and other information concerning social hosting ordinances passed by Arizona cities and town were given to town officials.

"A lot of work still needs to be done," she said. "Before you pass a local ordinance, it's important to

look at the state laws.

"Something like this can raise a lot of feathers. But if you have a big hole, it should be filled."

Groux said while enforcement of laws is important, it's equally important that awareness be increased in the community of existing laws and potential consequences of underage drinking and related crimes.

"If we see a trend of things not working out, then we can take a look at a local ordinance," she added.

The prevention coalition's mission is: "Through community-wide collaboration, Fountain Hills will work together to reduce substance abuse among youths ages 12-18, and, over time, among adults."