

North Shore Kiwanis for Prevention Kiwanis Members Participate in a Life Saving Workshop



Sgt. Christopher Ortiz receives a Certificate of Appreciation from North Shore Kiwanis President Bruce Levinson. Featured from Left to Right: Sgt. Christopher Ortiz, Glen Cove Police Department; Bruce Levinson, President of the North Shore Kiwanis; Paula Castiglia, PRIDE Coalition Coordinator, SAFE, Inc.

On Thursday, June 15, members of the North Shore Kiwanis received an important message delivered by Sgt. Chris Ortiz of the Glen Cove Police Department. Members became knowledgeable of drug trends among young people in society and learned the importance of talking to youth about the dangers of these drugs. "As a service-oriented organization in your community, you hold a unique role in combating the use of drugs and alcohol by our young people," stated Sgt. Ortiz. "You are leaders in the community. You have the ability to take this information and put it to work."

The North Shore Kiwanis club is action oriented. First chartered in 1964, the North Shore Club has been active as a service organization in our community for over 40 years. The Kiwanis club of North Shore is one part of Kiwanis International, a global organization of volunteers, dedicated to changing the world, one community and one child at a time. The North Shore Kiwanis achieve this goal through many service projects, including food drives, serving disabled children in summer camp, and scholarships for high school students. With such close knit ties with young people in the community, the Kiwanis members are dedicated to recognizing substance use among youth and teens and playing

an active role in drug and alcohol prevention.

Sgt. Ortiz explained that drug and alcohol use continues to plague our young people, including driving while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs. Everyday, 5,400 kids under the age of 16 take their first sip of alcohol. Prescription drug abuse has surpassed most other types of drug abuse among teens, with more than 2.1 million between the ages of 12 to 17 reporting abusing prescription drugs in 2006. Sgt. Ortiz explained that such behaviors put youth in danger and at a higher risk of other problematic behaviors – behaviors that could prove to be detrimental and possibly deadly if not properly dealt with.

According to the most recent Bach-Harrison Prevention Needs Assessment Survey, Glen Cove youth show similar trends. Administered by the Glen Cove School District in January 2010 to grades 6, 8, 10, & 12, this survey revealed that the percentage of students that reported being drunk or high at school is fairly high for 12th graders. Furthermore, drinking and driving rates are as high as 20% in the 12th grade. According to the survey, many teens who use alcohol or drugs report getting them from friends and family, some finding these drugs readily available in their own homes and those of friends and relatives.

Sgt. Ortiz presented participants with several pictures of real-life parties where Glen Cove Police discovered underage drinking, drug use, and Social Hosting violations. He then described in detail the extent to which teens are drinking to excess, including mixing several different types of liquor and playing games that promote binge drinking behavior. He explained that many times, teens are mixing large amounts of alcohol with prescription drugs – a potentially lethal partnership.

When used improperly, prescription drugs present a major danger to teens, including respiratory distress, heart ailments, poisoning, depression and suicide. According to the DEA, "opiod painkillers now cause more drug overdose deaths than cocaine and heroin combined." Sgt Ortiz encouraged North Shore Kiwanis members to secure their medications to prevent such circumstances. He suggested keeping medications locked away and tracking the quantities of each to make sure they are not being taken. He instructed that parents should pay close attention to their teen's behavior and look for signs of drug use, such as mood changes, aggressiveness, signs of being withdrawn or changes in interests and personality.

Sgt. Ortiz encouraged Kiwanis members to use their leadership role in their community to promote messages about the dangers of drug & alcohol use among teens and Social Host Law. He stressed the importance of parent-child communication and the continuity of messages that youth receive from their families, schools, community, and law enforcement. "If we all work together, we can make sure that our youth are receiving effective messages about the dangers of drug and alcohol use," stated Ortiz.

Parents can protect their teens by following these guidelines:

Safe guard prescription medications

by locking them up in a safe location. Keep track of prescription medications to ensure that they are not being taken by an unauthorized person.

Host safe, supervised alcohol-free and drug-free events for teens.

Be familiar with the signs and symptoms of drug use and pay close attention to their teen's behavior.

Talk with other parents about the importance of hosting supervised, alcohol-free events.

Talk with your children regularly about your expectations regarding alcohol and drug use.

SAFE and the Glen Cove Police Department continue to collaborate in taking proactive steps to stem the tide of abuse among youth and teens through prevention, education, treatment options, community awareness, and increased policing. The need for prevention strategies and consistent law enforcement of underage consumption of alcohol and sales has been an ongoing goal for SAFE Inc.'s PRIDE Project Coalition. In 2004, and again in 2008, SAFE, Inc. received a Drug-Free Communities Support Program Grant from the Office of National Drug Control Policy, making it one of only 224 agencies nationwide to be so awarded. In addition, the Coalition works in conjunction with the Glen Cove Police Department under a grant for the Enforcement of Underage Drinking Laws. The PRIDE Project Coalition is overseen by SAFE's Board of Directors and chaired by Executive Director Dr. Sharon E. Harris. The Board is made up of parents, police personnel, educators, and health care, financial and business professionals.

For more information regarding the North Shore Kiwanis, please visit www.northshorekiwanis.org. For more information regarding SAFE, Inc and the PRIDE Coalition, visit www.safeglen-cove.org, or call the SAFE, Inc office at 516-676-2008.