

Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition Names Co-Chairs and New Projects for Spring 2010

Randall Liberty, Kennebec County Sheriff, and Dr. Carol Fritz, Principal of Maranacook Community High School, have accepted key volunteer leadership positions with the Southern Kennebec Substance Abuse Work Group. These two community leaders will serve as Co-Chairs of this substance abuse prevention coalition for the next year.

In accepting this role with the coalition Sheriff Liberty said, "Substance abuse prevention is key to the success of the future of our children. Over the past several years, we have seen a sharp rise in the abuse of heroin, cocaine and prescription medications. Opiate addiction has fueled an increase in property crimes and resulted in child neglect. We cannot arrest our way out of this problem. We must prevent, educate and treat our citizens. I encourage parents, families and friends to join us in becoming involved in this very worthwhile project."

Dr. Fritz called for a community-wide approach, "We have a problem as a community and this joint effort is an important step toward helping all students grow into healthy, productive adults. We are working collaboratively with individuals from agencies and schools throughout southern Kennebec County. Our goals include providing healthy activities for students and reducing access to illegal substances."

"Sheriff Liberty and Dr. Fritz will help lead the development of a comprehensive approach to this problem," announced Immediate Past Chair, Rebecca West Dick. "As a team, they are committed to ensuring there are consequences for illegal substance use and building the skills of both youth and adult community members to make healthy choices."

The coalition has been developing its organizational structure and implementing prevention activities for about 18 months. It has two new projects planned for this spring. First, it is working on the safe collection and disposal of expired and unwanted prescription medications. Second, it will be facilitating conversations among parents of middle school students about underage drinking and what parents can do to encourage their children to make healthy choices. The coalition is hosted and supported by Healthy Communities of the Capital Area, a local Healthy Maine Partnership.

For more information, contact Neill Miner, Project Director at 207-588-5027 or go to the SAWG website at: <http://www.healthycommunitiesme.org/SKSAWG.html>

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Southern Kennebec Substance Abuse Work Group