

LOCAL NEWS

An EPIC lesson in sticker shock

EHS students get the message out on underage alcohol sales

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Published: Monday, April 12, 2010 10:54 AM CDT

Print Page

Edwardsville High School's Edwardsville Peer Influence Club (EPIC) members hit the streets Thursday. The members were fast and efficient. Travelling in a school bus, the bus would pull up to a pre-determined convenience store, gas station or grocer and the students would quickly exit the bus and enter the business. After thanking the business owner for supporting their efforts, the students went to work and in minutes they were gone.

The EPIC members were in the midst of kicking off the second annual "Project Sticker Shock," a youth-led initiative to change adult attitudes about selling and providing alcohol to minors.



EPIC members present the manager of the BP station on South Buchanan with a certificate for taking part in the campaign. Photo by Julia Biggs.

"Project Sticker Shock," a statewide public awareness campaign of the Illinois Liquor Control Commission is a part of the "Don't Be Sorry" campaign that reminds the general public of the consequences of underage drinking as well as the consequences for adults who provide alcohol to a minor.

The sticker shock campaign, which also kicks off April as Alcohol Awareness Month, involved the EHS EPIC members placing fluorescent orange and black stickers onto multi-packs of alcohol and decals, warning that it's illegal to provide alcohol to a minor, onto glass refrigerator doors at local retail stores. Posters were also placed on establishment exterior doors as a strong reminder of the materials' theme, "Providing Alcohol to Minors is Illegal, Unhealthy, and Unacceptable."

"We're asking adults to set a better example for kids," EPIC Council Member Dorothy Stamer said. "When adults supply alcohol to youth, it sends them very mixed messages."

"Underage drinking is not a teen problem, but a community problem," EPIC Co-Sponsor Missi Sanders said. "Adults, youth, law enforcement and retail stores all need to be part of the solution."

Donna Nahlik, Chestnut Health Systems and EPIC Co-Sponsor, travelled along with the students and pointed out the importance of the students' efforts and the businesses' support. "A strong community message is sent when businesses take responsibility for speaking out against underage drinking," Nahlik said. "Adults need to realize that allowing minors to drink in their home, or any place under their control, carries the same penalties under the law as furnishing, even if the adults don't supply the alcohol."

According to literature provided by the Illinois Liquor Control Commission, "A parent/legal guardian who knowingly allows persons under the age of 21 to consume alcohol at a private residence is subject to a maximum \$2,500 fine and up to one year in jail. If serious injury or death occurs, parent/legal guardian is subject to a Class 4 felony (up to three years in prison and fines up to \$25,000.)"

The literature further states that anyone providing alcohol to an individual under the age of 21 can be fined \$2,500 (maximum) and up to a year in jail for a misdemeanor offense.

When asking the students if this was a big problem in Edwardsville, EHS EPIC Member Amy McEvoy said, "It's craziness. Definitely throughout the whole year and then prom weekend is this weekend and that will be a

huge issue. And then graduation is coming up too.”

EHS EPIC Member Victoria Martinussen explained how local parents contribute to the teenage alcohol problem. “Parents will go and get it for them and they don’t think it’s a big deal – that kids are just being kids - but they really don’t know how much trouble it is and how many people can get hurt and how much you can be fined if you get caught,” Martinussen said. “Really it’s just ignorance.”

“There’s no such thing as responsible teenage drinking,” Nahlik said emphatically. “There is no such thing. Point blank, it just can’t happen.”

Retail stores participating in the “Project Sticker Shock” campaign include Cottonwood Station, Casey’s, and Glen Mart 66 in Glen Carbon as well as Moto Mart (both locations), Gas Mart, Edwardsville Frozen Foods, Handee-Mart, The Store, Dierbergs, Quik Trip, and BP Amoco in Edwardsville.

The EHS EPIC students alcohol awareness efforts culminated Thursday at 1 p.m. where they reconvened at the high school to discuss their alcohol prevention activities with Superintendent Ed Hightower, Edwardsville Mayor Gary Niebur, Madison County Sheriff Robert Hertz, SIUE’s Alcohol and Drug Task Force members, EHS Principal Norm Bohnenstiehl and CADD (Communities Altering Destructive Decisions) members.

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