

The Huntsville Times

6 part of success story for drug program

Juvenile referee tells board 'heart swollen with pride'

By WENDY REEVES

Times Staff Writer
wendyr@htimes.com

It's been an interesting 15 months dealing with drug-addicted youths, but Cathy Calloway says her "heart is swollen with pride" because six teens have graduated from Juvenile Drug Court in Madison County.

There are 44 juvenile drug court participants. Of those, 18 were high school dropouts when they started the program. Since the juvenile program began in April 2005, 15 partici-

pants have received GEDs; six are currently enrolled in college and one has enlisted in the Navy, Calloway told members of the Partnership for a Drug-Free Community board during its quarterly meeting Thursday.

Calloway is the juvenile court referee who also handles the Juvenile Drug Court program. Teens identified to have drug problems but have not been charged with a violent offense are eligible for the program.

Not all teens admitted to the program have succeeded, she said. But the program is about tackling the issues of drug addiction one youth at a time.

"On a daily and weekly basis, we're seeing a difference," she

said. "These kids have gotten jobs and their GEDs and they are sober and healthy."

One 18-year-old who entered the program had a 5-inch thick juvenile court file and had gone through several drug treatment programs.

"The first couple of weeks were tough," Calloway said. "But his drug screens have been clean 2½ months and that's the longest he's been clean and sober in years."

Calloway said watching that teen's progress is what the program is about.

"He finally got it," she said. "And now, maybe, he won't make it into the adult system."

Also at the meeting Joy Rhodes Watkins, regional coordinator for the State Department of Public Health, presented the Partnership a \$27,457 grant to continue its Youth Tobacco Prevention and Control Program.

Janet Craig, program coordinator, said the grant will allow the organization to continue its efforts with the Youth Empowerment Program focusing on environmental issues and dangers of second-hand smoke.

Over the next month, Craig will be looking for young people ages 11-18 from throughout Madison County to join the program. Anyone interested can contact Craig at the Partnership office at 539-7339 or by e-mail at craigjl@hiwaay.net.

Alcohol

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about the dangers of underage drinking, the importance of preventative steps for youth and ways the community can take action to reduce underage alcohol use.

There will be a group of students - middle and high school and college - who will talk about what they're seeing in their schools.

Educators, law enforcement, community leaders, an attorney, emergency room doctor and minister will also comprise discussion panels. Soule said speakers will be limited to just a few minutes so attendees will have more time to ask questions or express concerns.

In addition to the forum, fifth- and sixth-graders

Want to go?

The Underage Drinking Town Forum will be held March 28 from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. at the SAIC Conference Center, Cummings Research Park, 6725 Odyssey Drive.

To get there: From Research Park Boulevard, exit Bradford Drive west. Turn left onto Explorer and then take the first left onto Odyssey Drive. Turn right into SAIC parking lot.

For more information, call 539-7339.

throughout the country will be targeted for a new alcohol awareness campaign. Soule said the program will be taught in several local schools next month.

"This is just the beginning of trying to prevent and decrease alcohol use among our youth," Soule said. "It's not the solution, but the beginning."