

COALITION CORNER

Profile: Nancy Devaney



Nancy Devaney has lived in Narragansett for 11 years and is no stranger to being active in the community. In fact, she's made it her life. Nancy Devaney is the coordinator of Narragansett Youth Task Force (NYTF), an organization dedicated to the prevention of substance abuse through the implementation of effective science-based substance abuse prevention programs and the availability of educational resources for the families of Narragansett. Through her involvement with the NYTF, she became a community liaison for the Common Ground research grant issued to the University of Rhode Island in June 2004.

From this partnership, Ms. Devaney became involved with the Narragansett-URI Coalition as the chair of the Common Ground Subcommittee. The focus of this subcommittee is to specifically target underage drinking issues.

Ms. Devaney says her primary role as chair of the Common Ground subcommittee is to educate others. She says, "My job is to make sure people have the information they need to understand the [Common Ground] grant." As subcommittee chair, she says she prefers to set the agenda and then sit back to allow the members to move forward with the information she brings to them.

Ms. Devaney says she is impressed by the interest of the very active community members involved with the Coalition, some of whom sit on the Common Ground Subcommittee. "For example, some Common Ground Subcommittee members are interested in researching other communities similar to URI/Narragansett and how they create solutions. These active citizens then bring the information they find to the subcommittee meetings and how it might translate to our community is discussed."

"The reason the Narragansett-URI Coalition was formed was to improve the quality of life of residents and students and to improve the relationships between them as a whole," says Ms. Devaney. In a short time, the Common Ground Subcommittee has been taking actions to do just that.

Ms. Devaney is particularly proud of how the subcommittee has influenced mandatory Responsible Beverage Service (RBS) training in the state. The group worked to support the RBS law that went into effect January 1, 2006, which mandates compliance with Alcohol Server Training Regulations. RBS training educates bar owners and employees in strategies to avoid illegally selling alcohol to underage or intoxicated patrons.

She offers, "The Coalition and Common Ground Subcommittee helped get this law recognized as an environmental strategy and then get it passed." She also says that some of the ideas used to create the Cooperating Tavern/Liquor Store Program whereby owners show their commitment to upholding current laws were sparked in Common Ground Subcommittee meetings.

Some of the accomplishments of this subcommittee include:

- Increased enforcement of underage drinking laws
- Increased tavern participation in the Coalition
- Creation of a "Welcome Wagon" packet. A Common Ground Subcommittee member personally brings a welcome kit to newly opened businesses (liquor license holders). The kit raises awareness by providing information about Common Ground and the Cooperating Tavern/Liquor Store Program.
- Many Narragansett tavern and liquor store owners signing a town-wide agreement demonstrating their ongoing commitment to practice responsible beverage service.

Ms. Devaney believes that the Narragansett-URI Coalition is making a difference. "We can feel accomplished by seeing there's more enforcement, a reduction in incidents, more police patrol and more police responding to calls."

In the future, she would like to see more student participation, specifically in the Common Ground subcommittee. She is excited about upcoming activities surrounding Neighborhood Day in the communities and would like to see that students and residents can peacefully coexist. "I hope the Coalition continues to embrace a collaborative and community mindset between residents and students."

Please e-mail or call Jim Hurton, Communications Subcommittee Chairperson at jhurton@narragansettri.com, 783-7121 or Paula Santos, Coalition Coordinator, at pmsantos@uri.edu, 874-2583. And please visit our web site at www.uri.edu/alcohol/coalition.