

Coalition Corner

Realtor/Neighborhood Subcommittee of the Narragansett-URI Coalition



Building a Community of Mutual Respect

Joe Robenhymer truly believes in the work the Narragansett/URI Coalition has been doing for the community over the years. This is why after many years of involvement he continues to play an active role as the realtor representative and co-chair of the Realtor/Neighborhood Association Subcommittee. A resident of Narragansett for twenty-two years, Mr. Robenhymer is a broker at Ann O'Brien Realty and shares the leadership responsibilities of the subcommittee with co-chair Eileen Desforges, who represents the neighborhood associations.

The mission of the Realtor/Neighborhood Subcommittee is to "... meet the needs and concerns of our community by building and fostering effective relations between realtors and residents by establishing networks through listening and collaboration to promote a shared, positive community spirit."

The Realtor/Neighborhood subcommittee focuses on improvement of quality of life within the neighborhoods by working with realtors, community police officers, town officials, and the university. Among the goals of the subcommittee are working to reduce the number of nuisance/party houses, devising solutions that will result in a reduction of incidences in the community requiring police attention, and supporting URI's development of an off-campus student code of conduct.

During the past year, the subcommittee revised a model lease that addresses noise, litter, parking and party disturbances. They encouraged landlords and realtors to follow the lease to make it uniform for all rental properties within the town of Narragansett. The subcommittee takes the approach that it is important to be involved to help facilitate communication between the neighborhood associations, realtors, URI and the students, and to use a collaborative approach.

When the Coalition first started, Mr. Robenhymer remembers that the feeling in this community was as if everyone was essentially "on their own island" about the issues. He believes that over the years, there have been great accomplishments made by the Coalition. He commends Coalition members and particularly the Narragansett police, who he believes have done a great job of addressing the needs of the community.

Mr. Robenhymer has been impressed to see how many people have remained committed to the Coalition over the years. He believes that members are really dedicated to making it work for everyone, including both the neighbors and students. He states that members are very invested, which makes him proud to be a part of the Coalition.

One issue that Mr. Robenhymer believes is critical to remember is just how much URI students are a very viable part of the community, especially during the winter months.

He has been impressed with student attendance at meetings, but would like to see more students get involved in the next year and become more active on subcommittees and in the community. He encourages community members to look at "... the involvement of the students: the excellent facilitation by students at meetings, and the outstanding job done by presidents of fraternities and the student senate for example. They all need to be commended for what they have done for the Coalition."

Mr. Robenhymer goes on to discuss how initially the Coalition responded to a call to arms and has been very focused from the beginning. He hopes that as it continues to grow, members do not lose sight of the main goals. He encourages all involved not to forget that "... in our separate factions, the issues are still there, but we're not on separate islands trying to deal with these issues." In the future, he hopes the Coalition will continue to be a positive and neutral venue for people to express their opinions of what's going on in the community.

The next Coalition meeting is May 16th at 7:00pm in the Narragansett Town Hall.

For more information about the Narragansett-URI Coalition, 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. Please visit our web site at www.uri.edu/alcohol/coalition.

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