



Wicomico County Health Department host community forum to reduce underage drinking

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Wicomico County Health Department...

SALISBURY, Md. - Alcohol is the number one drug problem in the country. Along with that, comes underage drinking.

In 2016, 1,800 students from various college campuses died from alcohol poisoning. And freshman accounted for 40% of that number.

Back in February, a 19-year-old at Penn State student was drunk and fell repeatedly during a fraternity "pledge night", which resulted in his death.

And locally, community members are hoping to stop this problem of underage drinking from continuing.

We are told in Wicomico County, 27% of young people are consuming alcohol and 1 of 7 are binge drinking.

That's why the Wicomico County Health Department held a community forum, where 24 community members came together to discuss solutions to combat this problem.

One of the forum speakers was Cassandra Greisen, Associate Director of the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health.

"The reality is how we address that issue is by addressing the settings in which the behavior takes place and using policy and enforcement and reinforcing that in the community that is important and we want that as a community to happen to address this issue," Greisen says.

The town of Princess Anne even took proactive steps by placing a social host ordinance last year. It is a local tool for law enforcement to be able to provide civil fines. It's for underage drinking parties, or loud and unruly parties that impact the community in a large way.

Lauresa Wigfall, the Director of Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drugs Prevention Center at UMES, tells us since implementing this rule, they have seen a decrease in large gatherings along with the negatives of excessive drinking.

Those negatives are the number of assaults, number of sexual assaults, number of DUI's, and the number of transports for alcohol poisoning.

Experts say prevention is critical. But educating all these community members is also important because they are key players in making sure that change can happen around underage drinking.