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Coalition mission accomplished



Tiffani Markham and Sgt. Max Long hold booklets from the program *Know The Law*. The two instructors were in the Williston Elementary School Media Center on Thursday (June 16) to participate in the Levy County Prevention Coalition meeting, where they were recognized for their success.

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LEVY COUNTY -- The Levy County Prevention Coalition (LCPC) accomplished another mission this year, LCPC Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Lewis announced during the Thursday afternoon (June 16) meeting held in the Williston Elementary School Media Center.

The LCPC is very active on several fronts throughout the county as the group provides a helping hand for healthy community growth.

Levy County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Max Long of the LCSO Community Relations Division and Tiffani Markham, the Williston Elementary School staff person responsible for the WES Too Good For Drugs Program, were recognized by Lewis for their work in another project during the past school year.

Long and Markham helped hundreds of fifth grade children participate in the Know The Law Program at WES.

The Know The Law program is in conjunction with the LCPC, Long said, and it encourages young people to understand more about possible consequences from making bad choices.

From throughout Levy County, Lewis said, the LCPC goal this past school year was to have 500 children involved with the Know The Law Program, and that amount of youths was exceeded this year.

Lewis specifically thanked the LCSO and Sgt. Long for assisting the LCPC this year in that program.

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OTHER LCPC NEWS

LCPC Chairman of the Board Crystal Seley opened the meeting as guests were enjoying the delicious homemade lunch.

COO Lewis made the baked lasagna. LCPC Coordinator of Community Projects Rose C. Wilder made the salad and bread. LCPC Treasurer and Founder Robert Wells brought his special homemade cookies.

Those cookies were round-shaped like meatballs. They were made of oatmeal, walnuts and cranberries -- a very healthy cookie dessert. Soft drinks were made by the Coca-Cola Corp. and other soft drink manufacturers.

Seley said there was going to be a modified program from the one that had been planned previously for that afternoon, because some number of parents and community members were unable to attend. The original plan for the afternoon called for breaking into small groups to discuss alcohol abuse in Levy County.



ALCOHOL ABUSE

LCPC Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Lewis speaks about the potential for a grant to help the organization in its efforts to reduce underage alcoholic beverage consumption, sales of alcohol to people younger than 21 years old and other issues related to alcohol, which is the most popular drug for teens.

The LCPC is seeking a federal grant for \$50,000 a year for four years, Lewis said.

Known as the STOP Act grant, Lewis said, this grant will help fund what the LCPC is already doing, which will allow it to expand its efforts. This grant could fund a part-time coordinator in Bronson,

Chiefland and one other community, Lewis said. The third location has not been decided yet, he said.

This grant's acronym is the short title for "Sober Truth On Preventing Underage Drinking Act."

Lewis shared facts that show young people from eighth grade through high school in America are abusing alcoholic beverages, with some of them doing so daily.

By the time students leave eighth grade, Lewis said, 32 percent of them would have used alcohol. About 33 percent of high school students have used alcohol in the past 30 days, Lewis said. More than 15 percent of middle school students said they have consumed alcohol in the past 30 days, Lewis said.

Alcohol is the top substance that youths abuse today, Lewis said.

The LCSO in Levy County is the LCPC's biggest partner in combatting underage alcoholic

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beverage consumption, Lewis said. The LCSO and LCPC work together in the Responsible Vendor Training Program -- to educate clerks about how to detect fake IDs, and to take other steps to prevent underage people from buying alcohol, Lewis said.

The LCSO also works with state and municipal law enforcement agencies to catch clerks selling alcohol to people who are younger than 21 years old. The LCSO and LCPC conduct compliance checks to see if businesses are obeying the law regarding sales of alcohol to minors as another aspect to reduce underage drinking, Lewis said.

As for the STOP Act Grant program, its purpose is to prevent and reduce alcohol use among youth ages 12 to 20 years old in communities throughout the United States. STOP Act Grant funds must focus primarily on strengthening collaboration among community entities to reduce alcohol use among people in that age range.

Lewis spoke again about the “No One’s House” program which parents can sign up for.

One key source for alcoholic beverages, Lewis said, is from residences.

“This is a message that no one’s house is a safe place for teen drinking,” Lewis said.

This program to inform everyone is through print media, daily news websites and social media, he said.

Lewis said parents will sign a pledge card. There will be a place where parents can check to see if the house their child is visiting is noted as one where the parent does not allow teenagers to drink alcohol. The online place for a parent to sign the pledge is

<http://nooneshouse.com/>.

Another program Lewis mentioned is the Friday Nights Done Right. The plan is for the LCPC to have Friday night programs to provide a place for young people to have fun, while not drinking alcoholic beverages or using other illegal drugs.

The Dixie County Anti-Drug Coalition is having an extraordinary Friday Nights Done Right program in Steinhatchee on Friday (June 17). That is listed on the Community Calendar of the [CALENDAR PAGE](#).



(from left) Levy County Sheriff Bobby McCallum, Col. Mike Sheffield and Undersheriff Brett Beauchamp listen as LCPC Chief Operating Officer Jonathan Lewis speaks about alcohol use by people that are not at least 21 years old.

WASHINGTON TRIP

Levy County Sheriff Robert “Bobby” McCallum Jr., who was accompanied at the LCPC

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meeting by Undersheriff W.O. “Brett” Beauchamp III and Col. Mike Sheffield, let LCPC members and guests know there is a big trip planned for the county’s Safety Patrol members.

About 180 patrollers, parents, chaperones, LCSO staff and medical personnel are slated for a departure in the early morning on Monday (June 20), McCallum said. The Safety Patrol program is for fifth graders.

LCSO Lt. Shawn Hunt and Sgt. Long will be among the LCSO staff at the event. Sheriff McCallum is unable to go to Washington, D.C., this year, he said.

The sheriff said Levy County has participated in this event for 25-plus years now. He has gone on the tour about 13 times, he added.

Sheriff McCallum thanked the LCPC for the coalition’s working with the LCSO to help the people of Levy County. He especially noted the support given to law enforcement officers during the past few Annual Crab Fest events – just outside of the Williston city limits.

BACK TO SCHOOL RALLY

LCPC Treasurer Wells announced that Alvin L. Johnson and Mimi R. Johnson, leaders in the We SOAR Inc. group, are having a gospel sing and a back to school rally.

The back to school rally, primarily for middle and high school students, is Aug. 6.

The 15th Annual Gospel Festival is Aug. 13, Wells said.

The Summer Arts Program of We SOAR started on Monday, Wells said. This includes keyboard, dance, mime, and a youth choir. Wells encourages everyone to help support We SOAR Inc., because the performing arts have all but disappeared from Levy County public schools, he said.

Sheriff McCallum said First United Methodist Church of Chiefland is having its 5th Annual Epic End of Summer Bash on July 30, a Saturday. There is an anticipated attendance of 700 to 800 people this year.

Last year, there were in excess of 850 people. FUMC will provide approximately 450 backpacks pre-filled with some school supplies (paper, pens, pencils, crayons, etc.).

Local restaurants are providing 600 hot dogs and buns. FUMC is providing snow cones, a bouncy house, water slides, a dunking booth and an obstacle course. There will be other prizes for kids such as haircuts, toys, etc. FUMC welcomes all exhibitors with the following exceptions – no political advertising, no sales or fundraising.

The next meeting of the LCPC is anticipated to be in August, and then there are meetings expected to happen every couple of months after that during the school year.