

## Stoughton Area School District

# Wellness grant makes progress in first year

## 5-year plan aims to curb youth drinking, illegal drug use

SCOTT DE LARUELLE *Unified Newspaper Group*

As the Stoughton Well-ness Coalition continues its work to help keep area youth away from drugs and alcohol, project coordinator Teresa Pellett sees progress being made.

Pellett updated school board members Monday night on the coalition's work in the first year of a five-year \$625,000 federal Drug-Free Communities implemen-tation grant focusing on underage drinking, prescrip-tion and other drug misuse in the 12-17 age group. She said this year, most of the work has been providing training to community mem-bers, using information from the annual Dane County Youth Survey, which polls young people about things like tobacco, alcohol and drug use.

"We are one of the top states in the county for our drinking and alcohol cul-ture," she said.

While most of the group's initial efforts through the grant have focused on out-reach, they've also been active in working with the Stoughton Police Depart-ment on preventing retail-ers from selling alcohol to minors. Pellett said the group finished its third round of business checks last week, with great improve-ment in results compared to two previous rounds that started in October.

"The first one, 21 retail-ers were checked and seven sold to minors, and the sec-ond one checked 24 retailers and 11 sold to minors," she said. "This time, 24 were checked and only three sold to minors."

Pellett said of the three businesses that illegally sold alcohol to minors last week, two had electronic ID scanners but didn't use them.

"We still have some work to do in educating our retailers about best prac-tices," she said. "There's a lot of follow up happening with folks, but with our improvement this week, I'm really excited. Our goal is 100 percent, but we're a lot closer than we were in October."

Pellett said Stoughton police will send letters to the offending businesses that includes information

## On the web

the school board also discussed staffing recommendations and potentially rising fees Monday. Read more at:

[ConnectStoughton.com](http://ConnectStoughton.com)

on the law, best practices and how to train staff, as well as a notice that another check will be coming with-in the month. The coalition also gave away locks for "beer refrigerators" fam-ilies might have in their garages, and held over 120 educational events through-out the community.

"We're planning on con-tinuing this work and being as protective as we can," she said.

Vaping is something that has also caught the coali-tion's attention in the past year with its rapid rise in popularity among young people.

"We're pretty shocked by how quickly this took off," she said. "People don't real-ly know the dangers – kids really believe its safe."

Board members asked a few questions but most-ly listened to the half-hour presentation.

"We appreciate the work you do," said board presi-dent Frank Sullivan.

The Stoughton Wellness Coalition received a five-year, \$125,00-per-year Drug Free Communities imple-mentation grant in October 2017 from the Department of Health and Human Ser-vices, with Stoughton Hos-pital acting as the fiscal agent. The funds are dedi-cated to primary prevention of youth substance mis-use, and the focus areas are underage drinking, prescrip-tion drugs and now vaping, often called Juuling, after a popular brand name.

SWC began work in 2015 after receiving a two-year planning grant from the same agency, which allowed the coalition to reorganize, conduct a com-munity assessment, get additional training and apply for the implemen-tation grant, said Pellett. Stoughton is the only com-munity in Dane County to be funded.

For information on the coalition, contact Pellett at 877-5729 or [tpellett@swc@gmail.com](mailto:tpellett@swc@gmail.com) or visit [stoughtonwellness.org](http://stoughtonwellness.org).