

# New 'Party Patrol' hits the street

By Robin Walluck

Staff

Police are hitting the streets with extra patrols this prom and graduation season.

"Party patrols are the latest part of our efforts to keep Trumbull teens safe and alcohol-free," said Melissa McGarry, coordinator for the Trumbull Partnership Against Underage Drinking. "We want neighbors to know if they know someone is out of town and they see a bunch of kids at a house, they can call" the police and report the party.

Party Patrol is a grant the Trumbull Public received from the Connecticut Department of mental Health and Addiction Services. The Trumbull

Partnership Against Underage Drinking (TPAUD) is a coalition of educators, law enforcement, community members and parents. Throughout the year, they plan events to help educate teens.

"This grant provides the schools with a \$75,000 per year, for four years to address underage drinking," McGarry said. "One of the things that the coalition has made a priority is tackling underage drinking in the home. We continue to face the problems of permissive parents; the most common place where [teens] are drinking is in the home."

In 2006, the Social Host Law was enacted, making it illegal to serve alcohol to anyone under 21 on private property. But,

McGarry said, the most common place youth drink is in the home.

"We know that is especially true during prom and graduation season, and [that is why] TPAUD has decided to devote some of our resources to putting additional police officers on Trumbull's streets to target this community problem."

TPAUD surveyed students in seventh to twelfth grade in the school system in 2010.

"Overall, 39.9% of Trumbull High School Students reported drinking in the prior month, down from 49% of THS students in 2007," McGarry said.

She said 28.8% reported drinking enough to get drunk

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the month before, which was down from 36% in 2007. Two-thirds of high school students who drank, got their alcohol at their home, or a friend's home.

"Many parents in town feel that they can take the keys and minimize the risks of underage drinking," McGarry said. "Too much research shows that any drinking harms the teenage brain and body, as well as increases the likelihood that a teen will have an accident, be the victim of a crime or engage in unplanned or unprotected sex."

The Trumbull Police Department has a TipsLine where people can anonymously report underage drinking. As recently as two weeks ago, officers received a tip of underage drinking inside a home, and when officers arrived, they were able to break up the party, even before the alcohol arrived.

McGarry said the tips are completely anonymous. The software program used by the underage drinking TipsLine routes the number outside of the country before going to the number at the Trumbull Police Department.

Officers can have a conversation with you and have no idea what your phone number is, she said.

Text 274637 to report any suspected parties with underage drinkers in Trumbull.



Members of Trumbull High School's SADD club place warning stickers on bottles at a local liquor store. The program is part of a youth anti-drinking campaign. (Photo by Wayne Ratzenberger)