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LOCAL NEWS

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College Drinking a Tough Battle to Fight

Officials and staff from college towns, the colleges, and state government are getting together to try to figure out the next ways to combat underage drinking. The Illinois Liquor Control Commission is hosting the second annual College Town Summit at the governor's mansion in Springfield.

One idea on which many folks agree is that the message must get to kids sooner. One trainer, Sgt. Scott Friedlein of the Champaign Police Department, says he and others must find a way to reach kids in middle and high school, more like what the tobacco industry is doing.

Judy Shipp, executive director of the counseling center and student support services at the University of Illinois at Springfield, says too many college students believe they're just drinking the same amount of alcohol and as often as other college students, when the reports indicate that the averages are less and less often.

The ILCC says the need for attention is great. According to the Underage Drinking Enforcement Training Center, underage drinking costs Illinois nearly \$1 billion a year in medical care and work loss.

STATISTICS

Approximately 13,334,000 underage youth in the United States drink alcohol each year, according to the Centers for Disease Control. In 2007, according to self-reports by students in grades 9 through 12:

- 75 percent had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more days during their life
- 24 percent had their first drink of alcohol, other than a few sips, before age 13.
- 45 percent had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more occasion in the past 30 days
- 26 percent had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row (i.e. binge drinking) in the past 30 days.
- 4 percent had at least one drink of alcohol on school property on one or more of the past 30 days.

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