

Federal grant program to help kids resist alcohol and drugs

The Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services has awarded a federal Law Enforcement Education Partnership (LEEP) grant to school districts in Oswego County.

According to Joette Deane, director of Community Service for Oswego County Mental Health, the grant is targeted at students in sixth through eighth grades who are at risk of becoming involved with alcohol or other drugs. The Oswego County Mental Health Department administers the grant.

The program is staffed by teachers and student mentors from Hannibal, Oswego, Sandy Creek, Phoenix, Central Square, and Fulton school districts, law enforcement officers from the Oswego County Sheriff's Department, Oswego Police Department, and Fulton Police Department, and staff from Farnham, Inc., the County of Oswego Council on Alcoholism and Addictions, Inc., Services to Aid Families, and the SUNY Oswego Lifestyles Program.

"Our goals are to improve student behavior, increase school attendance, reduce discipline issues, provide academic assistance, and provide strategies for youth to cope with harassment, peer pressure, drugs, alcohol, and other related issues," explained Deane. "The students participate in after-school sessions consisting of academic support, fun activities, and a variety of presentations which target topic related to preventing abuse of alcohol and drugs, and violence."

In July, several students, teachers, agency representatives and police officers from throughout Oswego County spent a day at the Oswego County BOCES Mexico campus for the summer component of the program.

Students first participated in the BOCES "low ropes" course. Teams have to work together through several physical challenges to complete certain tasks. They develop teamwork skills, cooperation, respect, and self-esteem, as well as problem-solving skills, according to Preston Whitney of BOCES.

"After the ropes course, the students participated in a mock crime scene presented by members of the Oswego County Sheriff's Department, the Oswego and Fulton police departments, and the Oswego County District Attorney's Office," said Fulton Police Chief Mark Spawn.

Students spent about four hours investigating a bank robbery scene that was staged at the BOCES campus. The students began their investigation by responding to the call with police. Police coaches assisted the students as they interviewed witnesses, surveyed the crime scene, and collected evidence.

They were able to reconstruct the crime scene and develop suspects. Assisted by the police coaches, they applied for a search warrant, arrested two suspects, and recovered evidence from the crime.

At the end of the day, Assistant District Attorney Thomas Benedetto reviewed the students' case to see if it was "trial worthy."

Benedetto found that the case has some weaknesses, and he explained to the students how the case would proceed in a court setting.

"The students were faced with a dilemma," said Chief Spawn. "They truly believed that they were following the law, only to find out that the law would not allow some evidence to be presented in court. As a result, the students learned the value of teamwork, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills during the adventure."

Many of the officers praised the work of the students.

"They were very sharp," said one officer. "It was great to be able to interact with the kids in such a positive manner." "We learned from them as much as they learned from us," said another.

Students and teachers also said that the crime scene had a positive effect.

Danielle Dusharm of Hannibal High School noted that the mock crime scene "was much different than what you see on TV."

Students were presented with a scenario that showed them how an accomplice to a crime can be charged with the exact same

criminal offense as the offender.

Officer Sheila Simpson of the Fulton Police Department appreciated the value of the lesson of complicity, saying, "I was glad that they got to see how liable they can become for being part of a crime, no matter how small of a role."

"This was a tremendous opportunity for police officers to work with youth," said Chief Spawn. "Officers explained their roles and coached students through the investigative process. The students enjoyed working on a realistic crime using a hands-

on approach. The crime scene curriculum demonstrates some of the 'behind the scenes' work that goes on with a police investigation. At the end of the day, the analysis of the case by the District Attorney's Office showed the students that every piece of their work is subject to law, rules, and procedures. I think that the students walked away with some new insight into the role of the police and the law."

More information on the LEEP program, contact Deane weekdays at 349-3532 or 1-800-596-3200, ext. 3532.

Red Cross plans blood drives

The American Red Cross is offering area residents a chance to give the gift of blood. The Red Cross is teaming with local organizations and volunteers to sponsor the following blood donation drives:

Oct. 6 - Cayuga Community College, Holy Family Church, Fulton, 10 a.m. to 3 p.m.; Elks Club, Oswego, 12:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Oct. 11 - St. Michaels Parish Center, Central Square, 12:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Oct. 18 - Pulaski High School, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Oct. 20 - Masonic Lodge, Fulton, 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

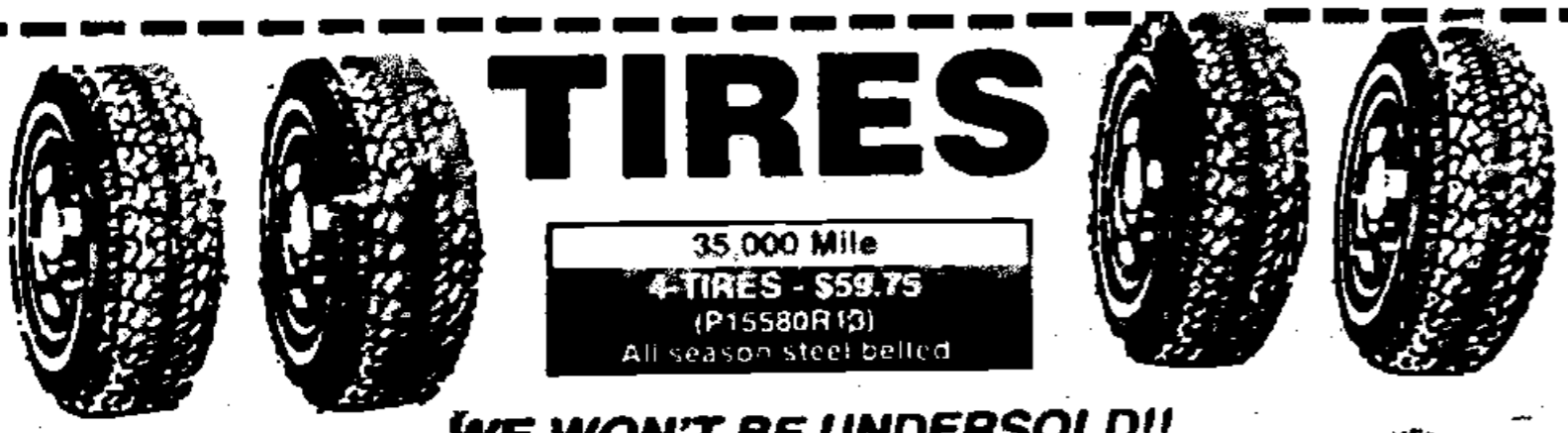
Oct. 22 - Oswego High School, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Oct. 26 - Univ. College at Oswego, 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

Oct. 27 - Univ. College at Oswego, 11:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

"Hospital patients, such as accident victims or those chronically ill with cancer and other diseases, rely on blood components throughout the year. Since a single blood donation can be broken down into the three components, one donor can help as many as three patients," explains Dr. John Burch, MD, Red Cross Medical Director for the New York - Pa. Region.

To give blood donors must be healthy, age 17 or older and must weigh at least 110 pounds. More information or an appointment is available by calling the Red Cross at 1-800-272-4543.



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