

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
June 13, 2011

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Law Enforcement Officers From Across The Northeast “Join Forces” For Youth Prevention

Focus Is On Collaboration With Communities, Trend Awareness/Early Intervention

STAMFORD, CT - More than 150 law enforcement officers from across the Northeast gathered for The Governor’s Prevention Partnership “Forces Unite To Keep Youth Safe, Successful and Drug-Free” Conference held in Stamford last week. The event, sponsored by The Wine and Spirit Wholesalers of Connecticut and Purdue Pharma, highlighted the major, but sometimes overlooked, role that law enforcement officers play in youth prevention.

Law enforcement officials learned about expanding their efforts through community collaborations, awareness of emerging trends and early intervention. This knowledge among officers led to a reduction in serious youth problems associated with drugs and alcohol.

Keynote speaker, Assistant United States Attorney Felice Duffy, motivated law enforcement officers to continue their efforts despite the lack of appreciation they may receive from the public. Duffy explained that it wasn’t until she began working at the U.S. Attorney’s office, that she fully realized the significance of a law enforcement officer’s role in prevention.

“As law enforcement officers, you are the first responders to car accidents, underage drinking parties and drug overdoses, and you are the ones who have to tell a parent that their child will never come home again,” said Duffy. “So, it is you who know first hand what things look like without prevention, not the public, and that is what you need to remember to stay motivated and continue your efforts to protect today’s youth.”

The emphasis on staying motivated while protecting today’s youth was continued during the afternoon presentation featuring State Police Detective Chris Bartolotta and Newport, RI Police Officer Kevin Parsonage. The presenting officers stressed the value of their fellow officers’ jobs, even when it may seem insignificant.

“Protecting youth is one of the most important jobs we have as law enforcement officers,” said Bartolotta. “We don’t even realize the impact we have when we prevent youth from

making destructive decisions. We're not just saving a child, we could be saving the next president of the United States, or the doctor who finds the cure for cancer."

Jill Spinetti, President of The Governor's Prevention Partnership, recognized law enforcement officers for the important role they play in their collaboration with prevention programs to keep youth safe. "We in the prevention community recognize and deeply appreciate that law enforcement is the right arm to our left as we join hands in coordinated efforts to end underage drinking and substance abuse, and their devastating consequences. We appreciate the great burden and responsibility police carry as the first responders and final defense with regards to our precious young people."

Twelve conference workshops were held throughout the day to demonstrate a variety of proactive and reactive approaches designed to keep youth safe in their communities. Led by nationally recognized state police detectives, drug control agents, community education specialists, underage drinking coalitions, and prevention experts, the workshops focused on issues such as emerging trends in alcohol and other illicit drugs, special events management, controlled party dispersal, drug identification at DUI stops, and enforcement issues including prescription drug abuse, underage drinking prevention, and others.

The Northeast Regional Law Enforcement Conference comes on the heels of 12 successful Connecticut Law Enforcement Conferences. The partnership decided to expand this year's event to include officers from New England, New York and New Jersey as a means of broadening the experience for all involved. Stamford Police Chief Robert Nivakoff, welcomed everyone to Stamford and Peter Berdon, Executive Director, Wine and Spirit Wholesalers of Connecticut, thanked the officers for the work they do in the area of youth prevention.

Founded in 1989 with a focus on Connecticut's youth, The Governor's Prevention Partnership is a statewide public-private alliance, building a strong healthy future workforce through leadership in mentoring and prevention of violence, bullying, underage drinking, alcohol and drug abuse.

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