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Small town focus on drinking

By Barry Porterfield

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Creating more awareness and providing some facts about the topic of underage drinking is the idea behind a town hall type meeting scheduled in Elmore City.

Teens, parents and the community as a whole have been invited to the meeting set for a 6:30 p.m. start Tuesday, April 8 in the Elmore City-Pernell Elementary School cafeteria.

“This is part of a national program that is trying to educate people on underage drinking and the problems it causes,” said elementary principal Dena York about underage youth drinking alcoholic beverages.

“We want to educate parents and kids in the community,” she said.

The meeting is also part of a larger effort to eventually acquire grant monies that would later fund alcohol and drug education programs in the local schools.

“A grant would enable us to get the education to the parents and the kids,” York said.

“As part of the grant process we are to have a town meeting and show the community we want to educate the public. But we’re not even to the point where we can apply for the grant.”

The Elmore City meeting is one of hundreds planned around the country as part of a campaign designed to better educate a cross-section of communities on the negative impact of underage drinking.

Also a part of the plan is to develop possible ways to address the issue.

The first step is researching the statistics of underage drinking.

Then comes town hall meetings like the one planned for Tuesday night, which York said will likely include two or three speakers.

“I feel strongly that this should be addressed,” York said, referring to underage drinking, “and I think it should be addressed from the age of 11 and up.

“I think we as patrons don’t realize the problem that’s already here. I don’t see it but I know it’s there,” she said.

“Even if there wasn’t a grant I am wanting to do something to educate kids on underage drinking. It’s not just in Elmore City. It’s in Pauls Valley. It’s everywhere.”

The topic of drinking is also a very personal one for York who had a now deceased alcoholic brother.

“I have a big personal thing for this,” she said.

York hopes there will be more meetings in the future designed to educate the Elmore community on the dangers of underage drinking.