

## Raising awareness



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Antlers American: Brad House

Melissa Humphries addresses a group during a brainstorming session during a meeting of the Too Much To Lose organization, a group devoted to curbing underage drinking.

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While other students were watching American Idol, surfing the Internet, playing video games or finishing up their homework on Thursday evening, one group of students were gathering to share ideas for reducing underage drinking in Pushmataha County.

Augmented by pizza, cookies and door prizes, the students met to share information on the impact of alcohol on teenagers, the scope of the problem in Pushmataha County, and the prevalence of alcohol-related media images which county citizens encounter on a daily basis.

Finally, the students met in small groups to brainstorm ideas for raising awareness, with the ultimate goal of reducing alcohol use by minors.

"It's good to see our youth and adults join together for a good cause," said Rep. R.C. Pruett as the meeting opened. "There are two types of people in the world: talkers and doers. Associate with the doers, there's a lot less competition."

The majority of the meeting was carried by the students who make up the membership of Too Much To Lose. Several members of the group stood and shared myths and facts about alcohol and alcohol usage. A Powerpoint presentation revealed the prevalence of alcohol-related images around Pushmataha County..

Upon the conclusion of the break-out sessions, the group compiled the following list of ideas to strengthen its mission of reducing underage drinking.

The list includes: Media campaign, underage drinking awareness activities, summer and/or fall Homecoming, an alcohol-free pass policy at the Deer Festival, utilize prisoners for school assemblies, mock arrest and/or "I Died, Who's Next" program, partner with and support Bearcats Against Drugs (BAD) After Prom Party.

The brainstorming sessions also yielded ideas for public education for parents regarding "alco-pop," supporting social host law, distributing letter to enforce zero tolerance for prom nights, etc., in conjunction with school assemblies.

Also, conducting a store front assessment, providing a responsible beverage store sales education event, participating in compliance checks. implementing a sticker campaign. increasing awareness of media exposure to

images promoting alcohol and requesting retailers to decrease signage, and a “Trashy Drunks” clean-up awareness program.

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