



News

Working Together coalition reports on Project Sticker Shock, other initiatives

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The Working Together Coalition (WTC) has had lots of positive feedback about various initiatives aimed at curbing underage drinking and substance abuse among youth.

Speaking to the Cass County Board July 5 at the Land Department in Backus, Kelly Felton said that Project Sticker Shock was especially welcomed by owners and managers of several off-sale establishments.

In late May, just before high school graduation and Memorial Day weekend, students from the Walker-Hackensack-Akeley, Pine River-Backus and Northland Community School Districts and WTC adult volunteers went to participating stores to apply special informational stickers to multi-packs of alcoholic beverages.

The stickers warned of the consequences of buying liquor for minors and called attention to Cass County's Social Host Ordinance that makes a person criminally liable for hosting a place where underage youth can consume alcohol. Felton said many store owners have asked for more stickers and that she has placed another order for them.

Sheriff Tom Burch said he has been handing out the stickers at parades and that county squad cars sport the new Zero Adult Providers (ZAP) logo.

The Take It to the Box initiative to decrease prescription drug abuse will begin soon. Surplus prescription drugs may be deposited at a secure drop box to be located at the Sheriff's Office. Felton said more details about this campaign will be released soon.

In another presentation to the board, Jack and Betty Thomas of Hackensack explained their plans to build Paws and Claws, a state-of-the-art animal shelter.

Paws and Claws is a nonprofit whose mission is "saving animal lives, educating youth and completing families." The Thomases noted that Cass County is one of few Minnesota counties that doesn't have an animal shelter.

The project is currently in the capital campaign phase and is a couple of years from groundbreaking, Betty Thomas said. Once funds have been raised, Phase 1 construction will begin on donated land along Highway 371 south of Hackensack.

Phase 1 would include a state-of-the-art animal shelter, pet cemetery, boarding facility and clinic for spay and neutering. Phase 2 would add a training facility for helper dogs who could assist the elderly and disabled.

Elderly pet owners can make arrangements for pets to be cared for if they become sick or die. The owner would set up a trust, and the pet would live with a caring foster family. Funds left in the trust after the pet dies would revert to Paws and Claws.

The Thomases have personally created an endowment that will support Paws and Claws into the future after they pass on. They currently are seeking corporate sponsorships and individual donations or gifts

from wills and estates. Paws and Claws will be a stand-alone corporation that will operate through fees and endowments.

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