

## Group raising awareness of underage drinking Featured

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The Walker County Community in Action Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking is currently raising awareness about the dangers of underage drinking in their Parents Who Host Lose the Most campaign.

The campaign was made possible through the Alabama Department of Mental Health Strategic Prevention Framework - State Incentive Grant, given to the Walker County Childrens Policy Council. The council then formed the Community in Action Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking.

The program aims to educate parents on the consequences of underage drinking, along with the warning signs of such behavior.

"It starts at home, so we need to get parents to buy into talking to your kids about the dangers, about the consequences, about the risks," program coordinator Tina Aaron said. "A lot of people look at drinking as the lesser evil."

District Court Judge Henry Allred, a member of the coalition, said underage drinking is particularly a problem for Walker County, the reason the grant was awarded to the Walker County Childrens Policy Council, Aaron said.

"We have a big problem with parents who kind of feel like if they host a party, they would rather have the kids there, at their house drinking, than have them out somewhere else. That's flawed logic," Allred said. "What we're trying to do is educate parents and our society about the dangers of underage drinking. ... We want to put that issue on the forefront. Every outcome that we have is going to be something that benefits all the children and our young people."

Coalition member Steven Aderholt, who represents District 4 on the Walker County Commission, said it's not only important to recognize that underage drinking is a problem, but that it's illegal.

"It's illegal for young people to drink," Aderholt said, "but I think what we're seeing, on a national trend, is access to alcohol that's being provided by parents."

The coalition is comprised of various community leaders, all lending their area of expertise to the cause. Allred said parents need to be educated about the risks involved with underage drinking, and he feels the campaign could benefit Walker County's future workforce.

"We talk about drugs and drug use with our young people, but the fact is, there's a lot more kids that are drinking than are using drugs. The perception that it's just not that big of a deal, until something tragic happens, is unacceptable," he said. "We want to make sure that we have a healthy workforce, a drug-free workforce, that can provide employment opportunities for the citizens of Walker County."

Aaron said the coalition welcomes volunteers, including educators, students and parents.

"We would love volunteers ... to join and promote awareness," she said.

For more information about the Walker County Community in Action Coalition, visit [www.walkerco-cia.org](http://www.walkerco-cia.org). More information about the underage drinking campaign can be found on the coalition's website or at

[www.drugfreeactionalliance.org](http://www.drugfreeactionalliance.org). The coalition also has a Facebook page. Their ads can be seen on a few billboards, including one on Walston Bridge Road.

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