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Sticking to the law

Teens and liquor stores spread warning on buying for minors

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Bulletin staff

Five teenage girls wearing light blue t-shirts with the words 'Peer Leader' on the back walked into Alex's Liquor Store on Corinth Street on Wednesday with a mission. By the time they left the store, each and every multi-pack of alcoholic beverages, including cases of beer and boxes of wine, would have an orange sticker on it.

The girls were working as part of Roslindale Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol (RMCA). Cathy Slade, co-coordinator of RMCA and director of the Healthy Roslindale Coalition, escorted the girls because they could not legally lift any of the alcohol containers.

Alex's is the third store the team has hit. Slade said the group had already been to Quintree Liquors and Murphy's, both on Washington Street.

"We were received well in both places. Quintree asked us to leave stickers so they could put them on, and Murphy's said 'come back anytime,'" Slade said.

The orange stickers inform adults of the punishment for providing alcohol to minors - a \$2,000 fine or up to one year in jail.

Slade said her team will attempt to visit each of the 10 li-

quor stores and three convenience stores in Roslindale that sell alcohol with the stickers. And she ordered 8,000 stickers to do so. Though the primary message of the stickers is clear to those thinking of buying beer for minors, the secondary message lets people know that the store itself is cooperative with the community.

"The liquor stores are aware and they do their best to not sell to kids," Slade said. "They have welcomed the idea. ... That is the message, that they're doing their part."

She said she didn't want the stores to feel the program was trying to limit their sales, "just underage drinking."

Hopefully, the stickers will make someone think twice about buying for minors, she said.

Seven teens are working for RMCA. For the past few months the teens have been trained to interview adults about their perceptions about underage drinking in Roslindale and what may be done to stop the problem.

Caitlin Erwin, 16, is a member of the RMCA program.

"It's a program to let adults and teens know that there are teens in Roslindale area that are drinking," she said.

She added that a lot of kids are getting into trouble because of alcohol.

"I think we just need some education and some awareness

about it," she said.

Amy Helpburn, the other co-coordinator of RMCA, said the "sticker shock" program is a great opportunity to raise awareness not only to the storeowner, but also the community.

"It's a good reminder this isn't just a casual thing," she said, meaning the punishment was not worth it.

The RMCA program started in May and is funded for five years by a grant. Helpburn said the goal of the first year was needs assessment. This included a parent survey that was mailed to 1,200 homes throughout Roslindale. She said she has already received 150 of those completed surveys and is "feeling pretty good about that."

The program will use the information it receives in those surveys to plan future projects, so they are hoping to gather as many as possible.

Helpburn said there are stipends for those seven peer leaders.

"A big part of this project is the youth development aspect - they're really the backbone," she said, adding that these young people bring positive messages to others.

For more information on the program and how to help, call Amy Helpburn at (617) 279-2265 or Cathy Slade at (617) 325-9022.



Working for the Roslindale Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol, one of the six-member team of teens places stickers on multi packs of alcohol at Alex's Liquors on Corinth Street in Roslindale. The stickers say the punishment for providing minors with alcohol is a \$2,000 fine or up to one year in jail. Alex's Liquors was the third store the group had been to. The Roslindale group will reach out to 10 liquor stores and three convenience stores in Roslindale to display the stickers.

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