

# SIUE Holds Town Hall Meeting to Prevent Alcohol and Substance Abuse

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EDWARDSVILLE – Southern Illinois University Edwardsville held a town hall meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 29, to prevent underage drinking and substance abuse. The event was made possible with funding received from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The Communities Talk: Town Hall Meeting to Prevent Underage Drinking is a program through a SAMHSA initiative with the goal of raising awareness among America's youth. The event's main focus was to discuss topics related to decision-making around alcohol and substance abuse, and provide attendees with scenarios and activities to better equip them for these issues.

"The goal was to create a platform for students to have realistic conversations about experiences they have had or might have concerning decision-making around the use of alcohol and other substances," said Lisa Thompson-Gibson, MA, LPC, staff counselor and coordinator for outreach and prevention initiatives for Counseling Services. "We wanted students to feel comfortable expressing their ideas and to have genuine interaction to facilitate improved personal understanding and awareness."

The event was a collaborative effort among Counseling Services, Prevention Education and Advocacy Center (PEACe), the Dean of Students Office, the Kimmel Leadership Center, Intercollegiate Athletics, School of Pharmacy, Psychology Club, Fraternity and Sorority Life, and SIUE Police.

"The planning committee was in tune with the complexities involved when making decisions about alcohol and substance use," Thompson-Gibson added. "We wanted the time spent together to be grounded in realistic circumstances that students maneuver through while in college."

Attendees were able to observe realistic scenarios acted out by Solid Lines Productions, a theater group that fosters community dialogue about socially relevant issues. Afterwards, participants engaged with the facilitator to discuss aspects of decision-making that occurred in the scenarios.

The College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (CPNP) SIUE student chapter also participated in the event, providing education to approximately 150 other students concerning alcohol use, how to talk to a friend about substance use and how to keep someone safe in the event of an overdose.

Additionally, students were able to participate in other interactive activities led by various organizations involved in the meeting. Activities included learning how to care for someone who has used alcohol or substances, self-care practices, journaling plans for future decision-making and learning about a field sobriety test. Attendees were also informed about community resources and ways to get involved throughout the campus community.

"Any time we can create opportunities for students to engage together about important topics like this, there is the capacity to make a positive impact on student well-being,"

said Thompson-Gibson. “Our goal is to facilitate positive student well-being using multiple methods, like this programming. This, in turn, impacts students while encouraging a sense of community on our campus.”

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville provides students with a high quality, affordable education that prepares them for successful careers and lives of purpose to shape a changing world. Built on the foundation of a broad-based liberal education, and enhanced by hands-on research and real-world experiences, the academic preparation SIUE students receive equips them to thrive in the global marketplace and make our communities better places to live. Situated on 2,660 acres of beautiful woodland atop the bluffs overlooking the natural beauty of the Mississippi River’s rich bottomland and only a short drive from downtown St. Louis, the SIUE campus is home to a diverse student body of more than 13,000.

Photo: Students visit a booth at an SIUE town hall meeting to prevent underage drinking and substance abuse.