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Ads, postcards part of teen-drinking campaign

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By LE ROY STANDISH
The Daily Sentinel

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"Choose not booze."

That's the theme of the Mesa County Underage Drinking Prevention Task Force's media campaign, which kicked off Tuesday morning at the Two River's Convention Center.

As part of the campaign, the task force will be running anti-drinking television ads, with voice-overs from local youth, and it will conduct a mass mailing of 10,000 postcards promoting the campaign.

The commercials are aimed at teenagers and adults.

Rebecca Spiess, chairwoman of the task force and undersheriff of the Mesa County Sheriff's Department, said some people see underage drinking as a rite of passage. "It is not OK," she said. "It is not a rite of passage."

The task force, which consists of numerous community organizations such as the Sheriff's Department, School District 51 and both local hospitals, has been working for the past decade to give parents and youth information and resources to combat underage drinking.

"Youth is fleeting; choose not to waste it on booze," said Margaret Pearson, a task force member and director of Build a Generation.

The cost of underage drinking is more than physical; it has a financial effect. Underage drinking cost Colorado residents \$1.2 billion in 2005, and the direct costs of underage drinking incurred through medical care and loss of work are \$468 million each year in Colorado, according to the International Institute for Alcohol Awareness.

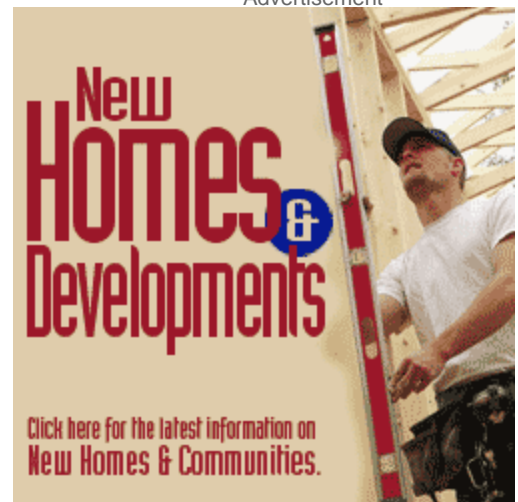
The institute also reports that 76 percent of Colorado students in grades 9 to 12 had at least one drink of alcohol; 47 percent had at least one drink in the last 30 days; and 31 percent had five or more drinks in a row in the last 30 days.

In 2005, 16.8 percent of all alcohol sold in Colorado was consumed by underage drinkers, the institute said.

For information about the task force, go to www.youthisallthat.org.

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