

GUEST COLUMN

# Students take lead in effort to curb teen drinking

BY WAT SINTHARATTANA



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Students place stickers on alcoholic beverages to remind people of the legal drinking age.

CONTRIBUTED

Last month, the Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS) and its high school youth launched the second year of their alcohol prevention campaign. The campaign is targeted toward immigrant and refugee adults in Chamblee, Clarkston, Doraville and Sandy Springs.

“Sticker Shock” is modeled after the Youth In Action project sponsored by Mothers Against Drunk Driving. The purpose of Sticker Shock is to remind the general public about the legal drinking age. Informative stickers are placed on beer and other alcoholic packages. The campaign’s goal is to make adults more aware of the penalties for supplying alcohol to individuals under 21 in the hope this reminder will help to prevent them from providing alcohol to our youth.

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, Asian-Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPI) and Latinos are the fastest-growing racial groups in the Southern U.S. In metro Atlanta alone, the Asian-American population increased 88 percent and the Latino population grew 102 percent between 2000 and 2010. Due to the diversity in culture and varying levels of English language proficiency, many immigrants and refugees are not aware of the minimum legal drinking age in the U.S. So to ensure the message is communicated successfully to this diverse community, the Sticker Shock message is translated into Burmese, Chinese, Korean, Nepali, Spanish and Vietnamese. In addition to the stickers, matching multilingual window clings are being displayed at local participating retailers.

Sticker Shock is an example of students taking leadership to make their communities healthier and safer. Accompanied by a CPACS manager, the student contacts a list of businesses in person to arrange a time to begin the campaign. Students are required to overcome problems that may occur during the implementation process. They may be required to modify the campaign’s procedures to meet a specific vendor’s conditions or convince an unwilling store owner of the benefits of the program’s effect on the community.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System states that lifetime prevalence of alcohol use is approximately 72 percent higher than cigarette use (54 percent)

and marijuana (38 percent) among Georgia high school students. It also mentioned that alcohol kills more teens than any illegal drugs combined. This is not simply a family problem. It is a problem that plagues the community.

The Center for Pan Asian Community Services Inc., a private nonprofit, promotes self-sufficiency and equity for immigrants, refugees and the underprivileged through comprehensive health and social services, capacity building and advocacy. Substance abuse prevention has been core to this mission since the early 1990s.

In 2009, CPACS founded the Georgia Asian and Pacific Islander Team Empowerment Coalition (GATE), in partnership with the Georgia Department of Developmental Disabilities. GATE's mission is to engage and empower AAPI and Latino communities of Georgia to prevent underage alcohol, tobacco, drug and other substance abuse. CPACS' substance abuse prevention team is a part of the disabilities' department's current Alcohol Prevention Project, a statewide program to prevent underage drinking.

CPACS is the first organization to implement the Sticker Shock campaign in six different languages in the Southeast. CPACS and GATE are the only ones reaching the AAPI and Latino communities in bringing prevention to immigrants and refugee communities. To date, we have implemented the campaign at 34 locations; more than 3,000 stickers were applied and over 110 window clings were displayed. The campaign is funded by the Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities.