Audubon County SPF SIG Collaboration Council

Champions Build Capacity!

Audubon County was one of 23 counties to receive the Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF SIG) to help reduce and prevent underage and binge drinking. At the start, we did not have an active coalition in place, so we had to build one from the ground up. We needed to recruit 12 sectors of the community to get involved. We quickly discovered, when you are working on a project, it is a lot easier to have a champion on your side, especially when you are hosting a Town Hall Meeting.

Two years ago, we hosted our first Town Hall Meeting to build awareness for the priorities of underage and binge drinking. The attendance was not stellar with little more than 20 attendees, so we were concerned when we decided to hold another one. For this upcoming meeting titled *“Our Town. Our Health. Our Future. Supporting teens in making healthy decisions”* we needed something extraordinary, and then, Tom walked into our office.

As we were visiting, he learned about our SPF SIG program, and he divulged that he was a recovering alcohol and drug addict and had been sober for several years. Tom started using when he was 18 years old until he hit rock bottom losing everything and everyone he loved. Now that he was a sober and successful business owner, he made a promise to himself that he would do what he could to help any kid from going down the same path. We needed a testimonial on our Town Hall Meeting panel, and Tom was it!

Little did we know that he would become chief recruiter, poster distributor, and cheerleader for the meeting. He was able to get students from two schools to attend and help at the registration table as well as educators, faith leaders, and other community members to attend.

With Tom’s help and passion about the topic, we were able to increase attendance to 71 people! Now, almost a year after the Town Hall Meeting, we still have community members engaged in our coalition due to his efforts.

