**Small County’s Big Problem Leads to Large Impact**

*Jones County, Iowa SPF SIG Project*

A 577 square mile radius in a Northeast region of Iowa is where you will discover beautiful landscapes of rolling hills called Jones County. In 2011, the small county’s twenty thousand residents were faced with a big problem. Its high adult binge drinking rates had placed the county second out of 99 counties across the state. At the time this ranking was announced, Jones County had already established a drug-free community coalition, the Jones County Safe and Health Youth Coalition. This group consisted of concerned citizens, focused on the negative impact substance use and abuse has on the health and wellness of its residents. Many community members were already aware of the issues surrounding underage drinking in the county and the impact on youth. But many did not realize the extent of the adult binge drinking problem.

The Jones County Safe and Healthy Youth Coalition sprang to action in addressing the county’s adult binge drinking problem. The introduction of the Jones County Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF SIG) Project allowed the Coalition to be guided with the appropriate next steps. Support from key stakeholders throughout the county ensured the right people were at the table when discussing and implementing solutions to the big problem. A particularly helpful partnership in tackling the high rates of adult binge drinking was with local law enforcement and the implementation and enforcement of effective alcohol policies.

The Jones County Community had collaborated with local law enforcement before the introduction of the SPF SIG Project. In 2006, with the support of Jones County students and law enforcement agencies the county passed a keg registration ordinance. The next year, that support transcended to the state capitol with passage of a keg registration state law. In the next several years, Jones County joined a few other leading counties and cities in the state in passing a Social Host ordinance in 2011 and as part of the SPF SIG project, Jones County passed the underage consumption ordinance in 2013. These actions again helped pave the way for the passage of both in a state law in 2014. Jones County once again faces an opportunity in being a pioneer towards effective policy change for the state of Iowa.

As of 2013, a little over a quarter of the nation had adopted a mandatory alcohol server/seller training state law. Jones County Sheriff Greg Graver feels having the responsible beverage server training institutionalized at a local level would have significant impact on the public safety of the community. Graver continued to express his own personal perspective on the importance that all employees are adequately trained to not over-serve their patrons and help keep the community safer and reduce the incidences of drunk driving. Graver added that he believes within the next few years Iowa, too, will adopt a mandatory alcohol compliance training state law.

In the meantime, as a way to sustain good practices at the local level and make sure employees remain actively certified as a responsible beverage server/seller, communities across Jones County are considering adoption of a policy to make certain businesses maintain alcohol compliant sales.  Currently, the city of Olin has passed the Mandatory Alcohol Compliance Training ordinance for their own community to help keep the town safer. Additionally, the Jones County Board of Supervisors passed the ordinance for all unincorporated areas; becoming the first county in the state to adopt such policy. The passage of these public safety/public health policies was made possible with the support of the businesses themselves. Since the implementation of the Jones County SPF SIG project 30 businesses across the county have participated in the responsible beverage server training resource, TIPS (Training Intervention Procedures); totaling 150 Jones County individuals.

The small county has seen big changes during the short time SPF SIG project has been implemented. In three years, the county has passed two ordinances to help reduce problem drinking and keep the community safer. During the past few years, Jones County has witnessed the passage of a state law that the county had already had in place and supported for several years. Jones County is a prime example of how a little community with a lot of determination and compassion can make a large impact.