Reality Check focuses on reducing smoking

ERIC GROSS

Diane Moore congratulates several of the Putnam students who received recognition at the ceremony including Ashley Barry, Amanda Bishop and Kylie Anderson , all from Brewster, Shannon Wiede of Lake Carmel, and Vincent Garofalo from Mahopac.

The New York State Tobacco Control Program's goal for 2010 is to have one million fewer smokers by year's end across the Empire State.

Last week the Lower Hudson Valley Chapter of the Tobacco Control Partners traveled to Mahopac for its 7th annual Breath of Fresh Air recognition event.

Two hundred people were on hand at the Villa Barone for the luncheon where five areas of concentration were announced to work together in achieving the goal.

Community partnerships, cessation centers, Reality Check, school policy partners, and College 4 Change all promised to engage local stakeholders while educating the community and exposing what were described as the "manipulative and deceptive marketing practices" of the tobacco industry.

Putnam Youth Director Joseph DeMarzo commended the county's Reality Check program under the direction of Diane Moore for helping to identify that "tobacco companies are targeting our most vulnerable population."

The group is also working with each of Putnam's six towns, through recreation departments, about implementing legislation creating smoke-free beaches and parks: "Today's children must grow up in a healthy environment. They must be taught that cigarettes are not good for them," said Putnam Commissioner of Health Dr. Sherlita Amler who welcomed the gathering to Mahopac.

Scott Santarella, President of the American Lung Association of New York, called New York State a "leader in fighting the tobacco industry. New York has implemented legislation banning tobacco advertisements in high school libraries. Tobacco companies targeted our children through periodicals subscribed to by local schools. Those advertisements have been eliminated."

DeMarzo said today's young person must make "clean and healthy choices without being deceived by the tobacco industry."

The get together also resulted in the awarding of certificates to a number of honorees throughout the Putnam-Westchester-Dutchess-Rockland and Orange County area.

Local recipients included Kieran Stack from Brewster High School, Valerie Nierman and Thomas Manko from the Mahopac School District; DeBellis Deli, Arthur Avenue Deli, Stahly's Deli, and Christopher's Deli; students Ashley Barry, Amanda Bishop, Shannon Wiede, Kylie Anderson, Michael Simone, Kayla Olenius, Vincent Garofalo, and Brian Schowetsky.

—Eric Gross

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