

Allston-Brighton Youth Coalition Expresses Healthy Influences through Art Project

Participation in National 'Above the Influence' Campaign Featured throughout Community

April 16, 2014

The Youth Coalition of the Allston-Brighton Substance Abuse Task Force (ABSATF) has completed an art project depicting the positive influences in their lives that help them say no to the negative influences, such as alcohol and drugs. Their artwork, inspired by youth throughout Allston-Brighton, will be displayed on billboards and posters and promoted at community events beginning this month. The project is part of the national "Above the Influence" (ATI) campaign.

In ABSATF Youth Coalition-led discussions at the Oak Square YMCA and Charlesview Residences, youth groups consistently identified sports, friends, music, art, health, school, family and love as positive influences in their lives. The Youth Coalition then examined the artwork collected at those discussions to create the final project which has been replicated on billboards and posters throughout the community. Youth Coalition members have asked several businesses -- predominantly those that youth frequent -- as well as schools and organizations to display the posters beginning in April which is Alcohol Awareness Month.

"I feel like I have the power to impact our community for the better. Just being able to raise awareness and spread this idea of staying above the influence and hope into our community is rewarding within itself," said Julia Roberto, ABSATF Youth Coalition member. "I just hope to spread awareness of a major problem [substance abuse] in our community and get the discussion of solutions to this out there."

The ABSATF Youth Coalition is made up of 11 members, ranging in age from 14 to 17, who live in Allston-Brighton. The coalition was part of a group that raised awareness of alcohol ads effects on teens, thus leading to a ban of alcohol advertising on MBTA property in 2012. The group continues its awareness efforts and hopes to effect an alcohol advertising ban on City of Boston property. Last year the group completed its first ATI project which was a quilt that hung in public places around Allston-Brighton.

"It is exciting to know that I can make a difference in my community and be part of a national campaign to promote healthy decision making. I hope to raise awareness about making healthy decisions and encouraging youth," said Michelle N., a Youth Coalition member.

The ABSATF will also promote the ATI message and provide giveaways to youth during several events this spring. First, it will host a Town Hall Meeting on April 16 for parents and students at Road to the Right Track, a track program led by the Boston Police Department D-14 and funded by a New Balance Foundation grant. Since its inception in 2013, ABSATF has partnered with the Boston Police Department to provide education about healthy choices for program participants.

ABSATF will also have a presence at the following community events:

- Oak Square YMCA Annual Healthy Kids Day, Saturday, April 26, 11 a.m. – 2 p.m.
- Boston Police Department Family Safety Day, Sunday, May 18, 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

About the Above the Influence (ATI) campaign

The Above the Influence brand remains one of the most widely recognized youth brands in the country and continues to strengthen teen anti-drug beliefs. ATI speaks in a voice relevant to today's teens – encouraging them to live “above the influence” of drugs and alcohol and reject the use of any substance that gets in the way of their goals in life.

In addition to national-level television and Internet advertising, the Campaign maintains a strong online presence – routinely communicating with nearly 300,000 teens via its ATI Facebook page, as well as online at AboveTheInfluence.com and the [Above the Influence YouTube channel](#). Findings from the Media Campaign's Youth Ad Tracking Survey of teens indicate that not only are 85 percent of teens aware of Above the Influence advertising, but 75 percent of teens – regardless of gender or ethnicity – say Above the Influence speaks to them. Additional evidence for the effectiveness of the "Above the Influence" national campaign recently appeared in two peer-reviewed journals, [Prevention Science](#) and the [American Journal of Public Health](#). The analyses showed that youth who reported exposure to the ATI campaign were less likely to begin use of marijuana compared to those not exposed to the ATI campaign – a finding consistent with the Media Campaign's own year-round Youth Ad Tracking Survey results.

About the Allston-Brighton Substance Abuse Task Force

The Allston-Brighton Substance Abuse Task Force is a coalition of community agencies and residents that mobilizes youth, families, community members and leaders to prevent and reduce substance abuse among youth and adults in our community. The Task Force has made significant strides over the years, becoming a recognized leader and community resource for tackling important issues such as underage drinking and prescription drug abuse. For more visit www.abdrugfree.org. Follow ABSATF on Twitter @abdrugfree Follow the ABSATF Youth Coalition on Twitter and Instagram @abyouth.

Source: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/about-anti-drug-media-campaign>