

A photograph of the Boston skyline, featuring several skyscrapers and buildings under a clear blue sky. The image is used as a background for the left portion of the header.

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FREE

Allston-Brighton Task Force gives local teens an escape through art

Austin Hall

Staff Reporter

Allston-Brighton will be a little more artsy after some organizations got together to support kids who'd rather paint than do drugs.

As a result, more than 40 businesses and organizations in Allston-Brighton now displaying a poster created by the Youth Coalition of the Allston-Brighton Substance Abuse Task Force (ABSATF). ABSATF members created the poster to depict positive influences in their lives that help them say "no" to negative influences such as alcohol and drugs, a press release states.

Their artwork was inspired by conversations with Allston-Brighton youth during focus groups, and is also on display on three billboards and will be promoted at community events this spring. The project is part of the national "Above the Influence" (ATI) campaign, a release states.

"It was a fun experience being able to express our ideas and creativity and to be a positive influence to the youth in our community," one member said. "I hope to make a difference and promote healthy decision making."

This person, who asked to remain anonymous, wasn't the only one who felt like they could make a difference.

"I feel like I have the power to impact our community for the better," Julia Roberto, another member, said. "Just be-



(Left to right): Amanda Chin and Beverly Ng hold up one of the posters around the A/B area that promotes staying above the influence.

COURTESY PHOTO

ing able to raise awareness and spread this idea of staying above the influence and hope into our community is rewarding within itself. I just hope to spread awareness of a major problem in our community [substance abuse] and get the discussion of solutions to this out there."

Helen Connolly, the project Manager for the ABSATF, said that this empowerment project's goal is to do just that.

"The meaning behind this project is to mobilize youth to think about the positive outcomes as a result of staying above the influence from alcohol and other drugs and to communicate these positives to other youth and adults in the community," Connolly said.

Yet, this is just one of the ways in which they try to keep kids away from drugs.

"This project is one of several alcohol and drug abuse prevention strategies implemented by the youth coalition. Underage drinking has been identified as a problem due in part to the vast numbers of college age students who live in the community."

The ATI brand works to continue to strengthen teen anti-drug beliefs, they state.

The ABSATF 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 the community.

For more information visit: www.abdrugfree.org. Follow ABSATF on Twitter @abdrugfree. Follow the ABSATF Youth Coalition on Twitter and Instagram @abyouth.