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FOR MEDIA INQUIRIES

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Community Coalition Empowers Youth Advocates in Chinatown

26 June, CHICAGO, The Coalition for Asian Substance Abuse Prevention (CASAP), completed two youth advocacy programs in Chicago's Chinatown— Engaging Youth for Positive Change and Photovoice—empowering 17 middle and high school youth to take on the issue of underage drinking in their community.

Engaging Youth for Positive Change (EYPC) is a program offered by the Center for Prevention Research and Development through the University of Illinois. EYPC is designed to educate, equip, and empower youth to be advocates within their own communities. Through EYPC, high school students learn research skills, critical thinking, communication strategies, and advocacy tactics to define an issue, determine local decision makers, discover data, and deliver the message. CASAP's EYPC program was hosted by Pui Tak Center, and nine students from Pui Tak Center's After School Matters and tutoring programs participated in the EYPC experience. Through the program, students focused on alcohol advertising and point-of-sale strategies to reduce underage drinking, like the "We Card Hard" campaign. Students designed their own, culturally-tailored "We Card Hard" materials that CASAP will share with decision makers and retailers through our bilingual Chinatown Alcohol Retailer Toolkit.

Photovoice is a 6-week project that uses digital photography to teach young people to see their community in a new way, reflect on their neighborhood's strengths and challenges, and write about how community issues affect their lives and their families. This spring, eight middle school and high school students at the Chinese American Service League completed CASAP's Photovoice program, using photography and creative writing to reflect on the impact of underage alcohol use. Students took pictures of alcohol advertising, store displays, and littered beer and liquor bottles in public parks and playgrounds. Each student selected one photo for a final community presentation. Their projects were [displayed at CASL](#) for a two-week period, reaching hundreds of children, youth, parents, seniors, and other Chinatown community members.

"Photovoice is a very meaningful activity," said Anna Gao, a young Photovoice participant. "It encourages students to form an awareness that teenagers should definitely say NO to alcohol. At the end of Photovoice, we completed our final project together, and we had an exhibition in the Chinese American Service League. Other students will learn to say no to alcohol as well after seeing it, and adults will pay more attention to substance abuse behaviors. It is a very interesting activity. We were able to go outside and take photos together and complete the final project as a big group. I feel so proud of ourselves."



1: Alcohol containers stacked in front of store window in Chinatown. Credit: Jiansheng and Haizhang

give a speech to a room full of adults. Our Engaging Youth for Positive Change and Photovoice programs are different. Young people are in the driving seat. They are the decision makers, and adults are there mostly as guides to help the students achieve their goals,” said Kevin Trieu, Program Coordinator for CASAP. “Students are the creative minds behind a lot of what we do at CASAP.”

In addition to Engaging Youth for Positive Change and Photovoice, CASAP also promotes other programming to reduce alcohol, tobacco, and substance abuse among Chinatown’s youth. For more information please visit www.asianhealth.org, www.casapil.com, or contact Angela Forfia at angela@asianhealth.org.

“I believe that Photovoice is a great opportunity for our students to raise their awareness in terms of substance abuse, especially alcohol use,” said Cindy Zhang, CASL youth coordinator. “They were able to learn many social skills through participating in this six-week project as well, such as teamwork skills, communication skills as well as presentation skills. They were allowed to express their diversified ideas to peers and shared opinions with each other. It is a great activity.”

Both Engaging Youth for Positive Change and Photovoice are funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s Drug-Free Communities and Sober Truth on Preventing Underage Drinking Act grants to reduce alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use among youth ages 12-18. Through these funds, the Coalition for Asian Substance Abuse Prevention engages youth and community volunteers to empower youth to make healthy life choices and promote policies and programs that foster a healthy, drug-free community.

“A lot of youth programming sees students as passive participants. They listen. They learn. Maybe they get up and

Asian Health Coalition: The Asian Health Coalition is a 501c(3) non-profit established in 1996, with a mission to improve the health and wellness of the Asian American community through advocacy, technical assistance, public and community-based education and research. To learn more, visit www.asianhealth.org.