

Underage drinking is a problem in Gothenburg

Written by Austin Benson

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Test kits could deter minors.

A recent survey done in Gothenburg High School revealed that two out of 10 freshmen have consumed alcohol.

Local high school counselor Jerry Wiggins said that number increases to nearly half by the time students are seniors.

Those facts interested Region II Human Services officials to apply for a Partnership for Success grant. An amount of \$26,000 will be used in 11 Nebraska counties, including Dawson County, to identify factors in the environment that contribute to underage drinking.

A meeting at the Gothenburg Public Library Friday provided community members evidence-based prevention strategies for 12- to 20-year-old consumers, prevention system director Shannon Sell said.

Gothenburg family practitioner Dr. Garret Shaw said underage drinking may stem from parents who consume. He also said that the grant money should go towards parents and how they can prevent their teenager from drinking.

“Buy alcohol tests in bulk and distribute them to parents,” Shaw said. “Have them available and educate parents on vigilance.”

If kids know their parents have a kit, that could act as a deterrent, Shaw said. The kids would know they have the possibility of being tested any day.

Region II regional administrator Kathy Seacrest said that one-time events don't change the norm.

The public is invited to another meeting about the facts of underage drinking scheduled for Friday, March 28, at 10 a.m. Gothenburg's Public Library.

abenson@qwestoffice.net

308-537-3636