

New town task force battles underage drinking

Coalition formed after lifeguard firing

By Sam Bari

Recreation Director Bill Piva has formed a coalition to combat underage drinking after three Mackerel Cove lifeguards, who were accused of drinking while on duty, were fired.

The coalition will host its first forum on Wednesday, July 30, from 5:30 to 7 p.m. at the Recreation Center and the public is encouraged to attend.

Piva said he was more than taken aback by the lifeguard incident. He found it to be a message telling of a societal trend that demands immediate attention, so he forged a partnership that includes representation from the Jamestown Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force, the police union, the Jamestown Recreation Department, the Teen Center and a state legislator to combat the problem head on.

He feels so strongly about the need to address the issue that he

took time from tending to a death in his family to make a statement over the weekend.

"Town lifeguards are the last kids in the world anyone would ever expect to do something so irresponsible," Piva said. Lifeguards hold a place in American history that represents courage, integrity, and all the other core values that make us who we are as a society, he added.

"The drinking while on duty was disturbing, but their cavalier attitude toward their actions made the incident worse than disturbing," Piva said. When asked why they did it, they told him, "Nobody was in the water. The weather was bad, so we decided to drink a few beers before it was time to go home. It was no big deal," Piva quoted them as saying.

He said that the fired lifeguards never showed the slightest remorse for their actions, nor did they apologize.

"The point is, they don't take the law seriously," Piva said. "Nei-

ther do they understand the ramifications or implications of what they did." He said that the flippant attitude teens have about drinking and the laws against it comes from parents and other adults who make light of seemingly ambiguous legislation. According to Piva, the laws are not strict enough and do not address everything they should.

State Representative Bruce Long (R-Jamestown, Middletown) who is involved with the forum said he could not agree more. "There are loopholes in the law," Long said. If an underage person has been drinking and he or she is not caught with an alcoholic beverage in their hand, no law has been broken. The state has no legislation covering "internal possession." The person can only be charged if another law is broken.

Piva explained that the lifeguard who was charged with drunk driving was not charged with underage possession of alcohol. She was charged with first offense er-

ratic operation of a vehicle while she had a blood alcohol content of .10 to .15. This is a misdemeanor, Piva said. The first offense is not considered a crime.

Long and Piva both said that parents and other adults who allow underage people to drink in their homes are sending a distorted message to young people. "If adults don't consider the matter serious, neither will their children," Long said.

"For some reason, many parents think it is perfectly all right for their teenage children to have a beer or drink wine in the confines of their home," Piva said. "And they know that being drunk, even though they are minors, is not an infraction of the law."

Long said the laws must be changed. He has introduced new legislation for next year that would close many of the loopholes and make the ordinances concerning underage drinking more effective.

Teen coordinator Debbie Tungett said that the forum will be

attended by Substance Abuse Prevention Task Force Coordinator Laura Hosley, Representative Long, Officer Mark Esposito from the Jamestown Police, Piva, and herself.

Tungett said that a North Kingstown parent who lost a child to a drunk driver was invited to speak, as well as officer Esposito, and Glen Miller, a professional in the field of substance abuse, who will offer tips and practical information.

Long, a staunch advocate of substance abuse prevention said that he will personally cover all expenses incurred for the forum, like the fees charged by Glen Miller, the substance abuse prevention professional, for his time and expertise.

Tungett said that the recreation department plans to offer training classes to all new and seasonal employees who work with children and teens in the spring before the summer season begins.

Iron Man

Continued from page 1

fore the race," Barry said. He described the swim conditions on race day as "uncharacteristically choppy." Barry also said that being from Rhode Island it was mentally tough knowing he had to bike to Providence. "Usually you start and finish in the same spot and here you are thinking I am going all the way to Providence."

Islander Dennis Nixon also trained with a partner. "I rode the bike course once and that made all the difference, knowing where and when to coast. I averaged 17 miles per hour which is faster than I have ever gone."

The overall winner was from Brazil and completed the course in just under four hours. The

first Ironman in Rhode Island was considered a success with athletes coming from Australia, Canada, Europe, and South America. Out of 1,300 competitors, only 200 were from Rhode Island. Some took almost eight hours to complete the course.

Although the heat and humidity is not ideal for running, the water temperature is warmer in the summer months even though most athletes wear wetsuits. Anthony said, "Generally everyone wears a wetsuit since you start with 100 swimmers at a time and people are going over you and under you and pulling you down and kicking you in the head so it is nice to have the extra flotation. It is totally different than swimming in the pool and any advantage that a person might have goes out the window."

All the athletes praised the

event organizers. Anthony said, "There were thousands of volunteers. There was water and Gatorade and food all over the place and police at every corner. Safety was important."

"These guys (Ironman) are professionals. It was the most well orchestrated event I have ever done," Nixon said.

All the islanders may compete in the Firman Half Ironman held in Narragansett in September, although Barry said, "Maybe I'll do a nice short one instead."

"I can only peak for one of these events a year without getting injured," Nixon said.

All three did say that they plan to do the Ironman 70.3 again next summer. Nixon can also be seen exiting the water this weekend in his ninth appearance at the Save the Bay swim.



Jamestown's Kevin Barry heads towards the finish line at the Amica Ironman 70.3 triathlon. Barry, 41, finished the 1.2-mile swim, 56-mile bike ride and 13.1-mile run in 6:10:27. Overall, nearly 1,300 competed in the inaugural event.

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A clear understanding of the respective roles of the units of our Town government is absolutely essential to the efficient and just performance of the functions assigned to each. Avoidance of political chicanery and conflicts of interest is an important objective in maintaining that clarity.

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