

Redlands police see results in first two years of Responsible Redlands

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REDLANDS >> The number of police officers in Redlands has declined since 2007, making it imperative for the department to patrol the city more efficiently.

As a way to address underage and binge-drinking related crimes in the city, the department in August 2013 launched the Responsible Redlands initiative, which uses evidence-based enforcement strategies and education to curb drunken driving, the sale of alcohol to minors and to hold irresponsible alcohol retailers accountable.

The initiative is about being responsible when it comes to alcohol, Redlands Police Cmdr. Chris Catren said.

“We’re not trying to make it dry Redlands,” he said. “We just want people to be responsible as far as binge drinking goes, and we obviously want to prevent underage drinking, which is criminal activity and leads to a whole host of other risk factors for kids, which we want to avoid.”

Since the department initiated Responsible Redlands, 78 alcohol-related citations have been issued through various operations, a Deemed Approved Ordinance has been adopted to address problem alcohol retailers and training has been provided to businesses.

Research has found that people are motivated to change their behavior if they are made aware that what they are doing is against the law and will be enforced, said Jeffrey Tufenkian, senior media advocacy strategist at the Institute for Public Strategies.

“Based on this, how can we use science to bring positive change and get ahead of some of these problems in the community?” he said the organization asks as it develops programs.

Catren said the department has been focusing on evidence-based policing for years. They look at studies that show an impact on curbing underage and binge drinking. Educating the public is a big part of that, he said.

“These all have evidence behind them that says these all work,” Catren said. “So, under Responsible Redlands, we just make sure whatever we’re doing is going to be toward an activity that works and getting the message out that we’re doing these things.”

Redlands was one of 12 communities selected to receive funding through the Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant — a five-year grant funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Prevention. Redlands was the only city in San Bernardino County selected.

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The city was approached by officials with San Bernardino County Department of Public Health and the institute, a nonprofit headquartered in San Diego that also works with the county, about participating in the grant program, Catren said.

“You have to get smart about how you’re doing things, so if we have the county and IPS coming in with money and help and evidence-based practices, we’re going to take advantage of it,” Catren said.

The grant has funded the purchase of bicycles for police, overtime for bar patrols in downtown, party patrols and other materials in support of the department’s operations. The department receives funding through the state Office of Traffic Safety and state Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control for other operations conducted under Responsible Redlands.

The institute continues to provide technical support to the department.

This includes providing data and research in support of science-based approaches that are working to reduce underage and binge drinking, said Tufenkian.

“We really worked from the beginning with the police department to help develop an approach that will help them do their job better and help improve the quality of life for Redlands’ residents,” Tufenkian said.

Some of the operations already being conducted by police were grouped under the initiative.

Redlands police conduct DUI checkpoints and saturation patrols — funded by the state Office of Traffic and Safety — to target drunken drivers. They also conduct shoulder tap and minor decoy operations — funded by the state Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control — to target the sale of alcohol to minors.

Shoulder tap operations target adults who agree to buy alcohol for a minor. Minor decoy operations target employees who serve alcohol to a minor. The police also run party patrols to enforce the city’s Social Host Ordinance, which authorizes them to cite adults who host parties where minors consume alcohol. The department has seen a 31 percent drop in “party calls” since the ordinance was implemented in March 2013, Catren said.

In February, the city adopted a Deemed Approved Ordinance, which set performance standards for alcohol establishments to adhere to or risk losing their license. All businesses in the city that already follow the standards were “deemed approved” when the ordinance was implemented.

One of the conditions under the ordinance is that alcohol retailers have 60 days for new staff hired after Feb. 17 — when the ordinance was passed — to complete Responsible Beverage Service training. The deadline for existing staff to be trained was six months after the ordinance passed.

On St. Patrick’s Day, Redlands police and alcohol servers who received this training held a joint operation to spot minors using fake identification cards to purchase alcohol.