

D.A. HOSTS PEER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE AT GILLETTE STADIUM IN FOXBOROUGH



Almost 300 Norfolk County students, teams from 25 local high schools, came together at Patriot Place this October 4, 2015 for a full day Peer Leadership Conference hosted by Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey.

"A strong core of students making healthy choices and promoting constructive activities may be the most important factor in building a strong, safe school community," District Attorney Morrissey said after the Oct. 4 conference.

"Every one of these students was hand-picked by their teachers and administrators because they already play an important role in the life of their school," DA Morrissey said, "and with the right support, network and assistance they can achieve even more."

Trainers from the Hockomock Area YMCA led two of the seminars, including a "Shark Tank" exercise in which each team pitched their concept for a public service announcement that fits the title "It's Not Worth It," about the real cost of risky behaviors.

"We know that teens often listen to teens more easily than on subjects like impaired driving, substance use and other issues," Morrissey said. "In the coming months, these teams will be developing PSAs that will resonate with other teens. Then we will help spread that work from community to community."

Different high schools are being paired along existing rivalry lines in a new "Team Rival," program where the peer leaders from those schools will compete to collect the Community Service Hours – including involvement in their community's substance abuse prevention coalition meetings and the PSA production. The Team Rival Project and the Public Prevention Campaign are both part of the Norfolk DA's Office's Drunk Driving Trust Fund prevention and education grant for 2015.

"We hope that we have opened some new opportunities and new avenues for those who came," DA Morrissey said.

The students heard from a young man who, as a teen, killed two of his best friends in a drunk driving crash, a mother who lost her son to an opiate overdose, a young woman whose casual experimentation with a pain pill led to an opiate addiction and overdose and the family of Haley Cremer, a past Norfolk County Peer Leader participant whose life was cut short by a reckless, unlicensed driver just steps from her home. A "Do Unto Others," award in Cremer's name will be given at future Peer Leadership Conferences starting next year.

Morrissey also thanked the New England Patriots organization and Patriot Place for their longstanding partnership in his public safety and prevention efforts, and for providing an impressive setting for the conference. "It was an appropriate forum for these impressive students," he said.