



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Press Release

DA Michael Morrissey hosts local schools Team at Peer Leadership Conference

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Twenty Norfolk County high schools sent teams of students to Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey's 2018 Peer Leadership Conference at Gillette Stadium – the first in a season of events designed for students supporting healthy decisions in their school communities.

"Having a core of motivated peer leaders is an important part of keeping high school cultures healthy and strong," District Attorney Morrissey said following the Nov. 20 event. "The Conference begins a year-long program of activities meant to encourage local peer leaders through education and reinforcement – to provide tools that they can then bring back to their high schools."

The additional events for this year are to create a public service announcement video highlighting substance abuse treatment and support resources available in each community, to perform community service projects involving substance abuse treatment and prevention, and getting fellow students to go through Arbella Insurance's online "Distractology" program, which demonstrates the real impact of texting and other distractions while driving.

Students participating in the challenges can also count that work toward their school's community service graduation requirements.

The 250 peer leaders attending the conference came from 20 high schools across Norfolk County; they heard stories about other teens who had done inspiring work in their school communities – including anti-bullying and no-text-and-drive campaigns – but also heard from adults who made profound mistakes in their teens.

Cory Palazzi, a former standout athlete, took the stage in the wheelchair he has used since a 2013 opiate overdose left him permanently disabled and spoke about his advocacy work, which is detailed on his web site, www.coryscause.com. Cory Scanlon spoke to a completely silent crowd about the night of teen drinking that ended with his two best friends dead in the car he was driving – and then a 4-year jail sentence for him.

"It is important for peer leaders to recognize what is really at stake in preventing substance abuse, drunk and distracted driving, and other destructive behaviors," District Attorney Morrissey said. "Having a group of peer leaders in any school making the right choices creates space for the kids who may be more apt to follow than lead, but would be just as happy to join a group making good choices."

Information about this program, open to all public high schools in Norfolk County, can be found on the TEAM RIVAL Scoreboard located on www.norfolkda.com.

The conference was funded by the award of a Drunk Driving Trust Fund Prevention Education and Training Grant – for the fifth consecutive year.