

SPOTLIGHT: Alabama Affiliate Features Former NBA Star at Local Event



Former NBA player Jayson Williams Former NBA player Jayson Williams spoke at the Council on Substance Abuse (COSA-NCADD) "Parents Who Host, Lose the Most" Community Forum last April 20th.

We are pleased to report that Mr. Williams was very down to earth and made an effort to personally greet every attendee as well as take pictures with families at the forum. Mr. Williams was invited to attend the event so that he could speak candidly about his alcohol addiction and the consequences of his actions.

In 2002, while under the influence of alcohol, Mr. Williams accidentally killed Costas Christofi, a limousine driver he had hired for the day. Although not convicted for aggravated manslaughter, Mr. Williams did eventually plead guilty to lesser charge and in 2010 began an 18 month prison term. While in prison, Mr. Williams began writing his second book titled, "Humbled- Letters from Prison." The book is a compelling and honest collection of his personal letters and journals from behind prison bars. Raffle winners at the forum received an autographed copy of his book.

Also speaking at the forum was Mike Reese, a local Alabama Alcohol Beverage Control (ABC) Enforcement Officer. His "Operation Save Teens" presentation included real life stories involving youth and the consequences of alcohol and/or drug use.

In addition to speakers, COSA-NCADD announced the winners of its Underage Drinking PSA contest. The top three entries received cash awards and were invited to join Mr. Williams and staff for dinner after the event. The winning team's PSA was aired on a local FOX affiliate, WCOV-20, and even received air time during American Idol. Another PSA was aired during programming that targeted adults.

Shereda Finch, executive director of COSA-NCADD stated, "We just have to be honest and keep talking to our youth about alcohol and drugs even if they don't want to hear it. Mr. Williams' story is an example of how one mistake can change your life forever regardless of how much money you have."

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According to the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE), underage drinking cost the citizens of Alabama \$1.0 billion in 2010. These costs included medical care, work loss, and pain and suffering associated with the multiple problems resulting from the use of alcohol by youth. Excluding pain and suffering from these costs, the direct costs of underage drinking incurred through medical care and loss of work cost Alabama \$392 million each year or \$1.31 per drink. In contrast, a drink in Alabama retails for \$1.06.

For a number of years COSA-NCADD has coordinated underage campaign events and activities in schools and in the community. The "Parents Who Host, Lose The Most: Don't be a party to teenage drinking" Campaign is a program of Drug-Free Action Alliance with funding from the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services.

Established in 1973 as a private non-profit organization, COSA-NCADD is the state affiliate member of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Addiction. The organization's mission is to reduce the incidence and prevalence of the disease of alcoholism, other drug addiction diseases, and related problems. For more information about COSA-NCADD, visit www.cosancadd.org.

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