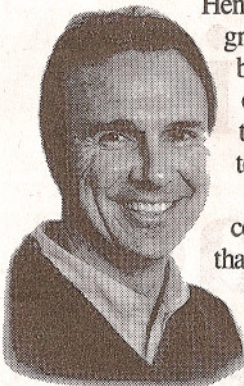


JIM KENYON

HELP WANTED

Businesses already have a lot to worry about these days: the economic slump, gasoline prices, health insurance costs, to name a few. So why is Liz



Hennig, who heads a local nonprofit group, going door-to-door to businesses in Newport, handing out invitations to a forum on teenage substance abuse tomorrow at the town rec center?

Because Hennig is trying to convince the business community that it, too, has a dog in the never-ending fight to help young people who are struggling with drugs and alcohol. Her pitch to employers: These same teens

make up part of your future hiring pool, if they aren't in it already.

"We're asking businesses to become more involved with the youth in their communities," Hennig said. "They can show kids that there are opportunities for them out there. Kids don't necessarily know that."

In exchange, businesses could end up with a "work force that is more capable of meeting their needs," she said.

A couple of themes have emerged in Hennig's early talks with employers. "They'd like to see a better work ethic," she told me. Some have also pointed out that for individuals to be successful in business — and just life in general — "maybe not everyone needs to go to college."

Hennig is the coordinator of an organization called Communities United for Substance Abuse Prevention, which I think even she realizes sounds a bit Pollyannish. For short, the group is known as the Sullivan County Coalition, (www.cufsap.org) which, along with Newport, covers Claremont and a dozen or so other New Hampshire towns.

As I wrote in this space two weeks ago, both New Hampshire and Vermont are about to throw a ton of federal money — \$11.5 million in each state — at combating underage drinking. Over the next few years, the Sullivan County Coalition figures to be tapping into those federal dollars.

Operating from the United Way of Sullivan County's office on Main Street in Newport, Hennig has shown a willingness to try new approaches to an age-old problem