

Quincy Rotary Club, Mayor Tom Koch plan school program on drug dangers

By Jack Encarnacao

Jan 03, 2011

QUINCY —

Next week will be Drug Awareness Week at both of the city's high schools.

The program consists of assemblies, school projects and presentations, including performances by John Morello, a Boston native and comedian who lost one brother to drunken driving and another to a heroin overdose.

In a presentation titled "Dirt," Morello adopts several personas as he examines the problem of substance abuse.

He will give two daytime performances for North Quincy High School students during the week, and he will perform "Dirt" for the public at 7 p.m. Tuesday at Quincy High School. He performed for Quincy High students last year.

The Drug Awareness Week will be the first at the high schools. Its elements were arranged by the school department, the mayor's drug task force, the Quincy Rotary Club and two local nonprofit groups, Impact Quincy and End Drug Abuse Now.

Both schools will host presentations by Ginger Katz, a Connecticut woman who lost her 20-year-old son to a heroin overdose. Katz went on to form the Courage to Speak Foundation, a nonprofit organization focused on educating young people about the dangers of drug and alcohol use.

On Thursday night at Quincy High School, Kathleen LaQuale, a professor in Bridgewater State University's movement arts and health promotion department, will give a talk for student athletes about the long-term health effects of steroid use.

Attending the talk is mandatory for all of Quincy's high school winter athletes.

Chris Cassani, a co-chairman of Mayor Thomas Koch's Substance Abuse Task Force, said a steroid presentation is one the task force has long wanted to arrange – to let students know that use of steroids isn't just a problem in professional sports.

"It's very prevalent in college sports and in high school sports, and a lot of kids don't realize the long-term repercussions of using steroids at a young age," Cassani said.

The week also will include the awarding of \$500 scholarships to the winners of a "Standing Up to Peer Pressure" essay contest for high school seniors, and a drug-prevention public service announcement video competition for juniors.

The Drug Awareness Week programs are being paid for with money raised by the mayor's annual charity golf tournament. Visit www.couragetospeak.org.