

# ICAN planning panel on alcohol usage by youths

By Weldon B. Johnson

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As part of its efforts to combat underage drinking, Improving Chandler Area Neighborhoods, or ICAN, is hosting a town hall Saturday.

The discussion, in conjunction with National Alcohol Awareness Month, will be from 12:30-1:30 p.m. Saturday.

Those at the meeting are also invited to take part in ICAN's Family and Community Day, which features music, food and games from 11 a.m. through 2:30 p.m. that day.

The redevelopment area of Chandler, which includes some of the neighborhoods in the central city, has a high rate of underage drinking.

ICAN identified the problem and

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was instrumental in organizing the Chandler Coalition on Youth Substance Abuse to address those concerns. Members include representatives from ICAN, schools, government agencies and churches.

Coalition efforts have included using ICAN youths for undercover alcohol purchases under the supervision of the police department and training merchants on identification-verification procedures when selling alcohol.

The town hall is the latest step along those lines.

"We are bringing folks together to discuss the issue of underage drinking in our community," said Christy McClendon,

the organization's CEO.

"We are seeking input on recommended solutions and to learn more about the resources available. We want to get the perspective of parents and youths alike."

The town hall will include a discussion with representatives from the non-profit and faith-based communities, Chandler Police Department and ICAN's teen leadership group.

"People can really expect a really dynamic dialogue between our audience and the experts on the panel," ICAN program director Ixechele Ledesma said. "And the town hall is actually taking place on our third annual family day so we'll also have a lot of cool stuff going on."