

## Sunland Park Casino to fight youth gambling

Written by Administrator

Sunday, 08 January 2017 18:00 -

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Marisol Diaz, For the Sun-News

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The Unified Prevention (UP!) Coalition for a Drug Free Doña Ana County, an initiative of the Southwest Center for Health Innovation, has been awarded a \$30,000 grant from the Sunland Park Racetrack and Casino.

This second-year grant will support UP!'s youth gambling prevention program, aimed at reducing the early development of gambling problems, most often in conjunction with other potentially problematic behaviors, such as smoking, drinking and drug use. The UP! Coalition's mission is to provide a venue for community collaboration and to support substance abuse prevention efforts from every available community resource.

In the first year of implementation, UP! delivered the Kids Don't Gamble: Wanna Bet? curriculum to 120 students in classroom, afterschool, and summer program settings and reached over 350 youth throughout Doña Ana County at community events and activities. Because of this curriculum, students reported a significant increase in knowledge regarding youth gambling. Over 97% of the participants correctly matched the definition of gambling with the definition provided by the curriculum.

One student expressed, "I learned that it is illegal (to gamble) if you are under 21." Youth gambling information was also delivered through distributed printed material to 160 parents. A community information session, attended by 21 parents, was held to discuss problem gambling, responsible gaming, and resources for addiction. Parents also received information regarding related risky behaviors, including drug and alcohol use.

The Sunland Park Racetrack and Casino investment will enable the UP! Coalition to continue to administer curriculum to youth in our community, host[HF1] community forums, and develop materials and media messages to raise awareness of the issue.

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“Sunland Park Racetrack and Casino wants young people to understand they can’t legally gamble until they are 21 years old,” stated Fred Heinrich, Sunland Park Racetrack & Casino’s general counsel and compliance officer. “We believe in what the UP! Coalition is doing in its other focus areas and want to extend the education being delivered to emphasize responsible gaming.”

Sunland Park Racetrack and Casino believes that supporting the community is important and has supported local efforts to positively impact communities. As a supporter of the New Mexico Council on Problem Gambling (NMCPG), a nonprofit organization that provides training, certification, and payment for all NM counselors certified to treat problem gamblers and their families, the local casino has helped hundreds of families throughout New Mexico with addiction and prevention services. The services provided have supported and empowered community members to play responsibly and seek professional support if problem gambling occurs.

“As a gambling, alcohol, and drug use disorder treatment professional, it is extremely gratifying to see the Sunland Park Racetrack and Casino take forward-thinking, proactive steps to prevent problems before they get started,” stated Edward (Ned) Rubin, psychologist and volunteer with the UP! Coalition.

It is the mission of the UP! Coalition to ensure that every child in Doña Ana County has the opportunity to live a life free of drugs and alcohol. Education increases resiliency and UP! will work to educate parents, youth and the community regarding associated behaviors that can develop into serious addictions.

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