

## **Pittsfield Forum Held on Health, Wellness and Sexuality**

**By Meggin Dail**

On Thursday June 5 the Pittsfield Drug and Alcohol Coalition (PDAC) held its second of four forums planned for this year. The topic of the forum was Health Wellness and Sexuality and was based on a recent survey done within Pittsfield High School regarding the students there. Subtopics covered under the general heading had to do with the frequency and percentage of students who; felt depressed, thought about suicide, planned suicide, had sexual intercourse, engaged in activities while under the influence of drugs and/or alcohol, and engaged in activities while under the influence of peer pressure.

The way the forums work, attendees are given a period to meet and greet, get refreshments and find their way to the tables to form groups who will later discuss subtopics given to them by the facilitators of the forum. Facilitators of the forum include representatives from Pittsfield Youth Workshop, Pittsfield Middle High School, Capitol Region Community Prevention Coalition, and The Pittsfield Police Association among many. The Pittsfield Community Coalition, the PDAC and Pittsfield Middle High School co-hosted the forums, providing speakers, topics and facilitators. Any member of the public from any town is welcome to attend the forums. Attendees include high school students, alumni of PMHS, parents, selectmen, concerned citizens, teachers, and various committees' members.

At this forum, one topic of discussion was brought up by tossing around a "hot potato," literally, a ball, to anyone who could come up with an answer to the question; "Why don't we like to talk about problems?" (Such as depression, alcohol, sex, and drugs) Answers included that it's difficult; that it's someone else's job; it's painful; we don't have the answers.

Then smaller groups were formed to discuss what they thought the statistics of the survey would reveal; "What percentage of students thought about suicide on a weekly basis?" and the like. Then the groups were given the answers and asked to compare their own answers to reality to see if the groups have a handle on the thoughts of the students.

There were many discussions revolving around the survey statistics and why the answers were what they were and what could be done to effect change.

The purpose of the forums is to make the public aware of the actual thoughts and actions of the youth in Pittsfield to better forge a direction for effective prevention, education, enforcement and awareness.

The mission of the PDAC is to promote a healthier Pittsfield Community by reducing substance abuse, underage drinking and alcohol addictions, and to sustain a collaborative community involvement with prevention information, intervention solutions and treatment efforts that will promote positive behaviors which will measurably improve the health and well being for our youth, families and citizens.

Even if you do not have a child or your child is no longer in school or you are a member of one of these committees, the time is now to attend one of these forums and see how you can be a part of giving Pittsfield a better future for our youth.

The next forum will take place in September and the tentative topic is mental health. For more information on the Pittsfield Drug and Alcohol Coalition visit the Town of Pittsfield Website at [pittsfield-nh.com](http://pittsfield-nh.com) or contact Officer John Webber at the Pittsfield Police Station (603) 435-7535.