

Chippewa Valley Coalition honors township supervisor

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Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families Director Charlene McGunn, left, and Chippewa Valley Superintendent Ron Roberts, right, present Clinton Township Supervisor Bob Cannon with the coalition's Community Partner Award on May 12. (Photo by Patricia O'Blenes)

CLINTON TOWNSHIP — The Chippewa Valley Coalition for Youth and Families honored Clinton Township Supervisor Bob Cannon with its Community Partner Award on May 12.

The coalition has been in operation for 21 years, and Cannon is the fifth recipient of the award.

Referred to as “Mr. Clinton Township” by Chippewa Valley Superintendent Ron Roberts during the award presentation, Cannon expressed his support for the coalition.

“It’s easy to support you and your coalition,” Cannon said to the crowd at the presentation. “To fight what we’re fighting, it seems sometimes like an uphill battle, but if we don’t do it, if you don’t do it, who’s going to do it?”

Cannon has been township supervisor since 2000, and in that time, coalition Director Charlene McGunn said, Cannon has been integral to the coalition’s efforts.

“He’s supported our coalition in many ways over the years,” McGunn said. “Our work is really intended to engage community, and he represents community. The ability to be able to really have an ally that can advise and can support is really important,” McGunn said.

McGunn and Cannon focused most of their talk on Cannon’s efforts in preventing the legalization of marijuana in Clinton Township and surrounding communities.

“Very recently, we approached Bob and asked him to assist us disseminating information throughout the county about marijuana and the concerns we had about emerging marijuana issues within the communities,” McGunn said.

Cannon created a resolution that has become a model in Macomb County to oppose the legalization of the drug. In nearby Utica, Cannon's efforts helped the city approve a resolution opposing decriminalizing recreational marijuana this past July while a group was attempting to get a proposal on the ballot for the November election.

"I remember the person who was trying to get the Utica proposal through calling me and telling me — he told me, 'We've been doing this for a long time in a lot of different places, and we've never lost. Anytime we go to put something in a community, it goes.' Well, this time it didn't go, for whatever reason it didn't go, so we're pleased about that, that we had a victory," Cannon said.

McGunn said that Cannon has helped the coalition in several other ways.

"He's long supported the Smart Moves program, which is a drug prevention program for fifth-graders in our Clinton Township schools. We do prescription drug takebacks, and Clinton Township police now have in their lobby a permanent disposal unit working in collaboration with us. We are able to disseminate information through Clinton Township cable, so it's a partnership in the best sense of the word," McGunn said.

The efforts of Cannon and McGunn helped the coalition earn a federal Drug-Free Communities grant. The coalition is on its second cycle with the grant after receiving its first one six years ago. The grants are awarded to coalitions to create community-based strategies to address the reduction and prevention of youth drug abuse, McGunn explained.

"I talk to people across the tri-county area who are in coalitions, and their community leaders just don't have the knowledge base to understand some of these complex issues — they just don't," McGunn said. "I don't want to speak for him, but his concern is his community, and so is ours."

Past recipients of the award have been Macomb County Prosecutor Eric Smith, Sheriff Anthony Wickersham, Police Chief Fred Posavetz and Nancy Buyle, a consultant at the Macomb Intermediate School District.