

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drugs

Prevention File



got beer?

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AT THE BEACH

- Communities and Campuses Coming Together for Prevention
- Patrolling Neighborhoods for Prevention
- Time to End Alcohol Marketing in Sports: The TEAMS Coalition

What MADD Should Do
 MADD's recent College Commission Report to Address Alcohol's Impact on America's College Campuses outlines five recommendations for MADD to help reduce underage and binge drinking among college students. They are:

- Campus Alcohol Policies Panel: Work with researchers and practitioners to identify and set a national standard for college alcohol policies.
- MADD Honor Roll of Colleges: Assess college and university communities on alcohol policies and prevention efforts (creating a helpful guide for parents and students selecting schools).
- Student Leadership: Involve college students through student policy summits, advocacy training programs and student-led college MADD chapters.
- Campus/Community Coalitions: Support groups involving students, administrators, community members, and enforcement officials to reduce underage and binge drinking.
- Grassroots Enforcement Campaign: Create a campaign to support and promote campus alcohol policies.

The MADD College Commission group was appointed by the MADD National Board of Directors in 1999 as part of the organization's efforts to reduce underage drinking—now part of MADD's formal mission. More information at: www3.madd.org/media/pressrel.cfm.

Volunteer and Drink Less

According to a study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* (December 2000), college students who attend schools that emphasize volunteering may be less likely to go on drinking binges. Students who attended these types of colleges and universities were 26 percent less likely to drink heavily than their peers at other schools. But students at schools that do not place a premium on volunteerism, but who did volunteer work themselves, were only 5 percent less likely to drink heavily.

"This finding suggests that the force of culture . . . in this case a campus culture characterized by higher-than-average levels of volunteering at the community level, exerts a greater protective effect on individual binge drinking behavior than does a specific individual's volunteer behavior," said Elissa R. Weitzman, PhD, the study's lead author, in a Reuters dispatch.

While it is not clear how volunteering reduces the tendency to drink heavily, Weitzman, who is at the Harvard School of Public Health, suggested that it may make students feel more connected to others and to their community. As a result, they may feel less stressed and therefore be less likely to relieve their stress through drinking.

"The findings suggest that we should promote and evaluate health interventions that facilitate community and connection, including volunteering," Weitzman said.

Where You Live on Campus Is Important

Residence hall environments are important, at least when it comes to high-risk drinking and alcohol-related problems. A recent study from the Harvard School of Public Health says that students who live in campus housing with bans on alcohol and smoking are less likely to engage in heavy drinking, drive with an alcohol-impaired friend, or fall behind in school work.

"While some heavy episodic drinkers live in these residences, it's clear that students who live there experience fewer alcohol-related problems than those who live in unrestricted housing," said Henry Wechsler, PhD, the study's lead author.

According to the survey, a third of students living in substance-free residences drank excessively, while the proportion of excessive drinkers was about half of students living in unrestricted housing.

And, students who said they didn't drink heavily in high school were less likely to engage in high-risk drinking if they lived in alcohol- and tobacco-free housing. But heavy drinking among that group nearly doubled if they lived in unrestricted residence halls.

"By not exposing incoming students to the drinking that exists in residences on some college campuses, students may be less inclined to pick up these behaviors," said Wechsler.

In Heaven There Is No Beer

"In heaven there is no beer, that's why we drink it here." So go the lyrics to a University of Iowa Pep Band tune played and sung to celebrate Iowa Hawkeye victories for more than 20 years—until now.

According to the campus paper *The Daily Iowan*, Kevin Kastens, director of the Hawkeye Marching Band and the Pep Band, said the UI received enough complaints about the song's references to alcohol that the University Bands and Athletics Department told him to stop the singing. Kastens said the band was told to only "play" the song after Hawkeye victories, not sing it, and the band has complied. However, no permanent options have yet been discussed in detail, he said.

Mark Oiler, a UI senior, told *The Daily Iowan* that the song will be missed if it is permanently removed from athletics events, but as long as the band is allowed to play it, the effects will be minimal.

"I don't like what they're doing because the song is not about drinking, it's just a way to celebrate a big win. But I don't believe that it will change anything too much, because as long as the band can play the song, the students will keep singing along."

According to Kastens, UI is the only school that celebrates victories with an alcohol-related song. The University of Wisconsin band may be the closest, he said, because it adapted a song from a Budweiser commercial, but it no longer makes any references to alcohol.

Moms, Talk to Your Kids

According to a survey of 266 incoming freshmen students (*Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, December 2000), college-bound teens who talk about drinking and its consequences with their mothers may be less likely to suffer the penalties of binge drinking once they get on campus.

Students who believed that drinking could positively affect their personality—agreeing with statements such as "a few drinks make it easier to talk to people"—were more likely to suffer drinking-related problems such as blackouts, regrettable sexual situations, or hangovers.

However, teens who talked to their mothers about the negative consequences of drinking were less likely to have positive beliefs about drinking. They

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COMMUNITIES AND CAMPUSES COMING TOGETHER FOR PREVENTION

Having a Party?

To do list:

- Buy Food
- Buy Non-Alcoholic Drinks
- Designate a Bartender
- Provide safe transportation
- Talk to the Neighbors
- Keep noise down

www.c-capp/sdsu.edu



San Diego State University C-CAPP

U.C. San Diego Student Health Services

University of San Diego Office of AOD Education



IN SEPTEMBER 1997, Scott Krueger, an 18-year-old freshman at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, died after ingesting 15 shots of alcohol in one hour. His death made national headlines. But it was not the first alcohol-poisoning death of a college student. And it was not the last.

Although no formal national registry exists, media accounts suggest that about 50 college students die from alcohol poisoning every year. A 1998 study by the Harvard School of Public Health reports that 44 percent of college students engage in so-called binge drinking (five drinks in one sitting for a man or four drinks for a woman).

In San Diego 110 community members have formed a coalition to do something about high-risk drinking and

other alcohol-related problems among college students. Called the Community-Collegiate Alcohol Prevention Partnership—or C-CAPP—it serves all 140,000 college students in the San Diego region.

C-CAPP is funded by two grants, one from the U.S. Department of Education, recently renewed for two years, and one from the National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse, running through 2004.

According to Marian Novak, program coordinator for C-CAPP, the secret to the organization's success is the diversity of its membership. It includes people from local police departments, state law enforcement organizations, regulatory agencies, community groups, prevention service providers, and businesses, including bar and restaurants owners whose customers are students. All nine major cam-

puses in San Diego County are represented, often by health service personnel, campus police, and students.

C-CAPP's many programs for preventing alcohol-related problems are based on scientific data provided by alcohol researchers. The research informs the prevention efforts. John Clapp, PhD, associate professor at the School of Social Work at San Diego

State University, is the principal

investigator for C-CAPP. He and his staff work with researchers from the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, a nonprofit agency based in Maryland.

"We use data to identify where problems are occurring and come up with specific strategies to respond to those problems," says Clapp. "What we do changes from time to time because we continually collect data."

Prevention research is increasingly finding

We use data to identify where problems are occurring and come up with specific strategies to respond to those problems.

New social norming campaign materials from Anheuser Busch and the National Association State Universities and Land Grant Colleges.

that the most effective strategies for reducing alcohol problems focus on environmental change. Such strategies involve changing the social and physical environment that promotes or condones alcohol use—especially high-risk use—among college students. Based on information provided by researchers, C-CAPP has formed several task forces that attempt to implement changes in the environment.

College Bar Task Force

The College Bar Task Force is a group of some 30 people, many of them owners of bars that are frequented by college students. The task force has encouraged the bar owners in the Pacific Beach area of San Diego, which is popular among college students, to enter into a community covenant that lists standards for alcohol service. Written by bar owners themselves, the covenant, among other things, includes a promise not to sell drinks for less than two dollars each.

“Businesses make more money because they are not selling alcohol at a loss,” says Novak. “And if all the bars do it, they remain competitive.”

Novak sees the covenant as a vehicle for helping bar owners be responsible while maintaining business vitality.

“Kids still come and spend the same amount

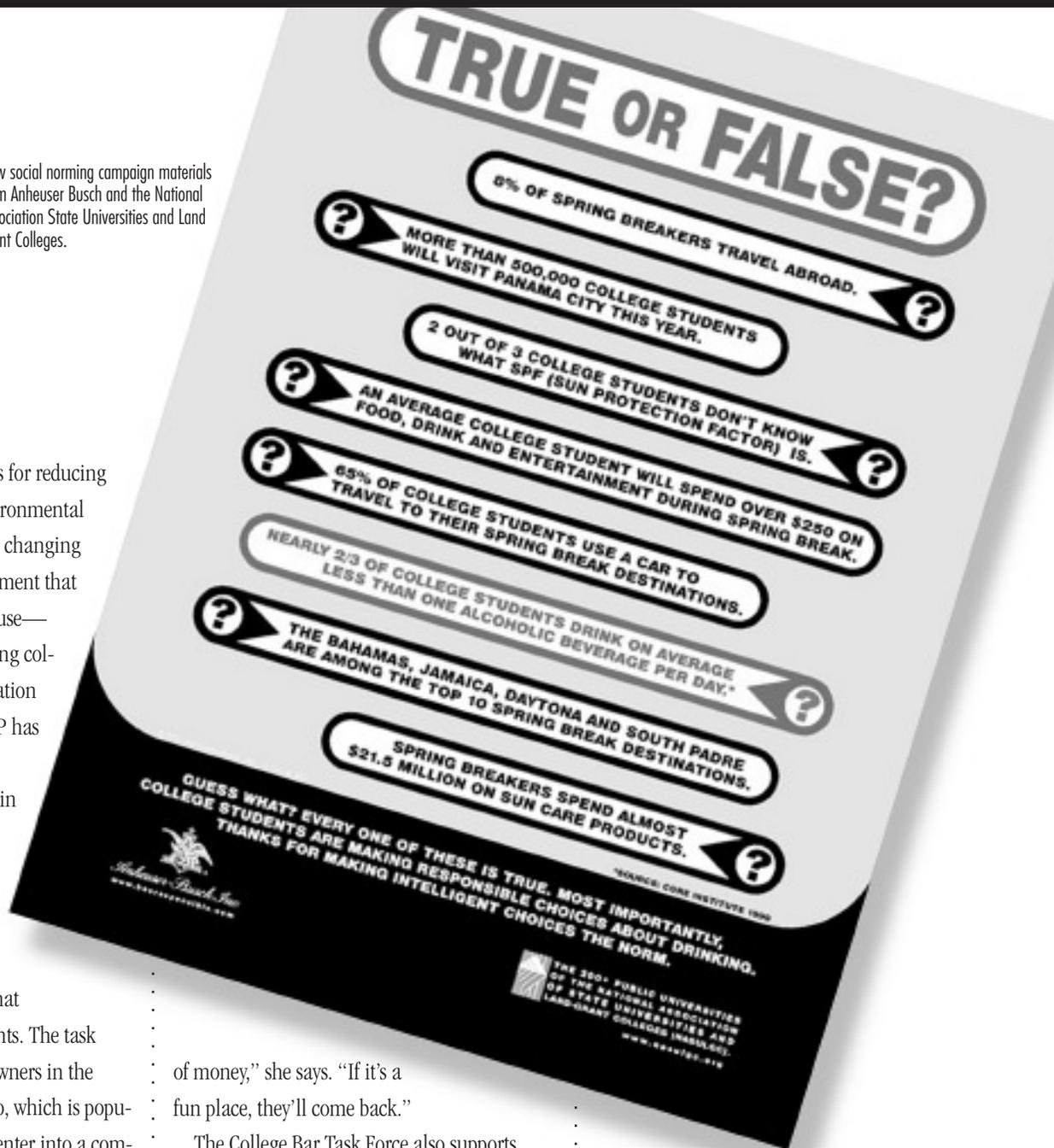
of money,” she says. “If it’s a fun place, they’ll come back.”

The College Bar Task Force also supports responsible serving practices at college bars. The task force works with the San Diego Food and Beverage Association and the California Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control. Together, they facilitate free classes for wait staff. Servers learn how to detect fake identification, how to recognize those under the influence of alcohol and club drugs, and how to intervene when people are intoxicated. They also learn to promote the use of designated drivers and to encourage bar patrons to eat.

In addition to working with bar owners and servers, the task force is working with

media outlets that carry advertisements for drink specials at college bars. Task force members have approached student newspapers on college campuses and asked them to stop running advertisements for drinks that sell for less than two dollars each. However, because campus newspapers gain much of their revenue from advertisements, this campaign has been only marginally successful.

Novak praises the bar owners for their participation in the College Bar Task Force and notes that they are a vital part of C-CAPP. “They are part of the equation and want to be part of the community,” she said.



Noisy parties seem to be a chronic problem in the college areas. You're not going to be able to stop drinking, but the purpose is to get students to drink in a manner that is not obnoxious to neighbors.

Safe and Responsible Private Party Task Force

Surveys of students find that about half of their drinking events occur at private parties. The Safe and Responsible Private Party Task Force has adopted several prevention strategies based on this research finding.

The task force has produced 20,000 door hangers and has distributed them in Mission Beach, Pacific Beach, and near SDSU and UCSD, areas where college students reside. On one side of the door hangers there are safe party tips for students, urging them to serve food with their drinks, to offer nonalcoholic beverages to their guests, and to discourage drinking and driving. On the other side, the door hangers give information about the legal ramifications of drinking.

The Safe and Responsible Private Party Task Force targets residents of houses in the college areas of San Diego who host parties where alcohol use and noise create unhappy neighbors.

"This (noisy parties) seems to be a chronic problem in the college areas. You're not going to be able to stop drinking, but the purpose is to get students to drink in a manner that is not obnoxious to neighbors," says Paul Thomas, who lives in the area near SDSU and is one the cochairs of C-CAPP.

The task force is working with the San Diego Police Department to implement the city's Community Assisted Party Program (CAPP). Under the program, if a house is the scene of a noisy party that generates a police visit twice in 31 days, it is "CAPPed." That means the house cannot host another party for a full year.

If the house violates the CAPP, a resident can be arrested on the spot, even if that person was not the cause of previous police calls. Currently, about 40 houses in San Diego are CAPPed.

The C-CAPP task force has embraced the CAPP program as a main prevention strategy, with volunteers passing out information about CAPP in student neighborhoods. Novak says that the CAPP program lets students know that they "can't party and destroy the neighborhood."

Fraternity and sorority houses are not part of the CAPP program. Instead, C-CAPP works with them to promote safe parties. At SDSU, some student leaders of fraternities and sororities are members of C-CAPP. They use C-CAPP's resources to enhance the Student-to-Student peer education program that promotes a healthy lifestyle for college students. The student leaders provide non-drinking monitors at fraternity and sorority parties. Monitors attempt to prevent students from drinking and driving.

The Safe and Responsible Private Party Task Force discourages campus bookstores from selling items that encourage high-risk drinking, such as yard-long glasses for beer and glasses with lines on the sides representing the amount a freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior should drink. In general, bookstores have cooperated with the task force. For example, the SDSU bookstore no longer sells such items.

C-CAPP members have assisted with other environmental prevention strategies aimed at reducing the problems associated with drinking among college students. They have co-sponsored, with the Associated Students at SDSU,

CALL FOR MORE TOWN-GOWN COOPERATION

Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America has a new resource for those looking to bridge the gap between "town" and "gown" that can often lead to frustration and finger-pointing when it comes to problems related to drinking by college and university students. Called *Working in Partnership with Local Colleges and Universities*, the publication is number 34 in CADCA's *Strategizer* series of technical assistance manuals for community coalitions. According to authors William DeJong, PhD, and Joel Epstein, JD, of the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention, now may be the best time for community coalitions to reach out to colleges and university officials to get them involved with their prevention efforts.

"Until recently, campus officials focused most of their prevention efforts on awareness education, including orientation for first-year students, alcohol awareness week, and peer education. Education is necessary, of course, but research has shown that education has little effect on alcohol and other drug problems so long as the campus and community environment supports high-risk drinking and drug use," say DeJong and Epstein.

Now colleges and universities are adopting a more comprehensive approach to prevention that highlights the importance of environmental change, and that means looking beyond the campus into the surrounding community. And emerging research shows that campus and community coalitions can have a significant impact on their community.

Strategizer 34 offers a number of suggestions for greater campus-community collaborations, as well as some examples of what others have done. It is available at CADCA by calling 800/54-2232 or online at the Higher Education Center Website at www.edc.org/hec/.

a program that provides safe rides home to students who have been out partying. This pilot project has been operating for one year. It runs from 11 p.m. to 3 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays only. Students in Pacific Beach, downtown San Diego, and the area near SDSU who are unable to drive because they are intoxicated can telephone Cloud 9, a private shuttle service. Three vans are on call to serve them, with a guaranteed turnaround time of 40 minutes. The first phone call triggers a two-hour contract with a flat-rate charge of \$69 that is paid for by the Associated Students.

"It shows that the Associated Students are concerned about keeping students who have been drinking safe," says Thomas.

Some C-CAPP members have helped the San Diego Police Department with their enforcement of existing laws. The Shoulder Tap program, which enforces laws that prohibit adults from buying alcohol for minors, is one program. Another is Operation Decoy, which enforces laws that prohibit the selling of alcohol to minors by sending underage purchasers into alcohol outlets to attempt to purchase alcoholic beverages.

Border Project to Reduce Problems

San Diego's close proximity to Tijuana, Mexico, where the drinking age is 18, creates a situation in which alcohol is legally available to virtually any college student who crosses the border. Students who may not understand the Mexican customs and laws and who are prone to drive to and from the Mexican bars face

added risks. In an attempt to reduce these risks, C-CAPP works with the Border Project to Reduce Teen and Binge Drinking, sponsored by the San Diego County Health Department and implemented by the San Diego-based Institute for Public Strategies.

The Border Project works with officials, community activists, business owners, and social service personnel in Mexico toward increased enforcement of existing laws and the elimination of advertising by Tijuana bars in California. In addition, the project seeks to change public policy by supporting new Mexican laws that would close the bars earlier and increase the border drinking age to 21.

C-CAPP's effectiveness in reducing problems is continually being evaluated by the researchers associated with the program.

"Only time will tell how successful we are,"

says cochair Thomas. "One problem is we have a moving target. Students come and go . . . every year, you have a change in the cast of characters."

But program coordinator Novak says: "We are making changes and we are not going to give up." □



Jessica Sledge Kozloff, PhD, has been president of Bloomsburg University in Pennsylvania since 1994 and has been instrumental in creating the “Bloomsburg Initiative” as a model for a campus-town partnership for prevention of alcohol problems. The program at Bloomsburg was undertaken with the support of the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board and was partially funded by a grant from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The number of students being cited for alcohol violations at Bloomsburg has been declining since the initiative began. In this interview with Prevention File, Kozloff discusses how people in a typical college town tackled an alcohol problem that was having serious consequences for students and the community.

Q&A WITH JESSICA KOZLOFF

What is unusual about the Bloomsburg Initiative?

A: For one thing, it was the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board that came to us in 1997 with the notion of finding a university and a community that would develop a model that could be used statewide to reduce drinking problems involving students. Another thing was that we were given money with very few strings attached. We were encouraged to work very closely with our community and with the Liquor Control Board to come up with something that made sense to us.

How did the community react to this? Did it take some selling?

A: The immediate response was very positive because the community saw it as an enforcement effort. Student drinking had been a perennial issue at Bloomsburg for years. There had been some student tragedies associated with drinking in the past, and I think there was a great deal of interest in the community in seeing the university crack down. We got their immediate buy-in because they thought it might help with enforcement, but as time has gone on we've gone much further than just enforcement, and that has taken a bit of selling. We were fortunate in having a mayor who was really interested in having the town work with the university. I think this represented a shift in the thinking of people in the community—a shift from thinking that the university ought to

be doing more to control student behavior to a feeling that maybe we can work together on this.

What was the reaction at the university?

A: Initially people at the university, and especially the students, were somewhat taken aback. The immediate publicity that came out about it focused on such things as having more undercover police at taverns and using new devices for checking IDs. This has changed, though, since we started going much further than just enforcement. We spend as much effort now on two other things—education about alcohol abuse and alternative activities for students.

The education is not just for university students. We are actually using our students to go out into the middle schools and high schools and give alcohol education programs. And we've been working with the community to find places that will offer alcohol-free activities. A restaurant or tavern will set aside an occasional evening to have an 18-and-older party without alcohol. We're getting very good turnouts when it happens, and we're trying to get more of these on the calendar. Our whole program is continuing to get support from the Liquor Control Board. More important than the financial support is the constant interaction with the Liquor Control Board and the focus they have on education. The Board is working with a variety of universities now, bringing us all together to talk about best practices and how we're trying to handle certain problems.

■

We have always been a dry campus and we're still a dry campus. If you're under age and are caught drinking it's usually not at a bar but at a party off campus that our students are giving and letting underage students come in.

Have the bar and restaurant people been cooperative?

A: They've been fairly cooperative, and we're working with them on setting up a server-training program. Our next big thrust is to try to get the business people to help us develop more alternative activities. Probably our biggest problem has been the beer distributors, getting them to cooperate with us in terms of monitoring better where they deliver kegs. People do have to sign when they get a keg delivered, but we would like to see more regulations—how many can be delivered to one place, for instance. That kind of thing.

Are keg parties a big problem?

A: We have always been a dry campus and we're still a dry campus. If you're under age and are caught drinking it's usually not at a bar but at a party off campus that our students are giving and letting underage students come in. If the party is raided and those underage students are cited off-campus for underage drinking, then we have a very comprehensive alcohol education program that kicks in. And we have some pretty stringent sanctions for those who

provide alcohol to underage students. If you're cited and found guilty of providing alcohol to a minor, you'll be brought up for a judicial hearing and you can be suspended from the university for a year.

Many fraternities and sororities are being pressured by their national offices to clean up their act where drinking is concerned. Is that helping?

A: It was the fraternities in the past that really spread the drinking culture by having parties where you pay five dollars at the door and drink all you want. What we've been doing with our fraternities and sororities is saying that they cannot continue to exist as recognized groups unless they follow certain rules. The parties have to be by invitation, they can't have kegs, and so forth. Greek life has been modified a great deal in the last five years. Actually, most of the fraternities and sororities at Bloomsburg are not affiliated with nationals. Part of our big push here is to basically put many of the same mandates on the local houses that the nationals have put on theirs. The locals had been the strongest and most popular here because they had fewer rules and regulations. What the





administration has done over the last three or four years is impose the same regulations on the locals.

What difference is all this making in the atmosphere on the campus? When new students arrive today what do they find that's different from four or five years ago?

A: There's certainly more enforcement of liquor laws than there was five years ago. And there's much more cooperation between the town and the university, working together in various ways. For example, each summer we bring about 250 freshmen here to prepare them for their enrollment at the university. These students typically gravitated to off-campus residences for parties that often had quite a bit of alcohol available. That's not typical anymore. And we've begun a very concentrated effort with the town to sponsor social activities at commercial establishments that are alcohol-free. That's something a freshman would see that hadn't happened before.

How does the cooperation between the university and the town actually work? How do you get together?

A: We set up a task force that has about a dozen members, individuals from both the com-

munity and the university who meet three times a year to review what's been going on and decide what kind of strategies we need to do next. And of course the students are represented. I think you have to be as inclusive as possible in building this type of coalition. You've got to involve students, you've got to involve law enforcement, you've got to involve the business sector, as well as the professionals from the university. I wish we'd started earlier with the kind of communication we have now.

Communication seems to be the important thing.

A: I think you can never communicate enough with your town officials. There are times when relationships get a little tense and testy, especially when you're a university of 7,000 students in a population of 10,000 people in a little town. It requires constant communication. Before we began the Bloomsburg Initiative the town was focusing strictly on enforcement and that caused a huge backlash on our campus. Once we started the Initiative it brought the students into the picture and they could understand what the issues were and what we were trying to do. We were able to lessen a lot of the student apprehension and accusations about a 'police state.' I think the biggest mistake people make in a situation like this is to focus just on enforcement. Enforcement is important, but you have to do more.

In early February 2001, a Bloomsburg University freshman died as a result of alcohol poisoning at an off-campus residence. How has this tragedy affected the Bloomsburg Initiative?

A. It has illustrated that our job is ongoing. No matter what progress we make, we can never let our guard down. It has also strengthened our resolve, both in the community and on campus, that enforcement and education efforts must be enhanced. An 18-year-old student, who lived on campus where alcohol is prohibited, died off campus, where it was provided, in this case allegedly by a non-Bloomsburg University student. If this doesn't make a statement for the importance of town/university collaboration, I don't know what will!

No matter what progress we make, we can never let our guard down.





College Students' Support for Tougher Alcohol Policies: A Silent Majority

By William DeJong, Linda M. Langford, and John H. Pryor

MANY HIGHER EDUCATION ADMINISTRATORS are taking a stronger stance against heavy alcohol consumption, with an emphasis on new policies and stricter enforcement. On some campuses, this get-tough approach has provoked student riots.

Seeing the news reports, administrators at other colleges and universities sometimes hesitate to act for fear of the uproar that might result. Is there a way for tougher policies to be introduced to avoid an overreaction?

We believe there is. Meaningful student input when developing policy recommendations is part of the answer, of course. Perhaps even more crucial, however, is making clear to the campus community that the majority of students do want something done to improve campus safety.

Misperceptions of Student Drinking

Most college students do not know that the majority of their peers either abstain or use alcohol in a responsible way. Studies on dozens of campuses have demonstrated what has come to be called the "misperception effect"—whatever the true level of drinking among the

student body, students believe that heavy drinking is more common than it is. On most traditional campuses, students believe the majority of students drink heavily and frequently when the truth is just the opposite.

This misperception may be the key to understanding why students sometimes protest so angrily when college administrators announce new alcohol policies. Just as students overestimate how many heavy drinkers there are, so too will they overestimate student resistance to tougher policies. From the students' viewpoint, if most of their peers drink heavily, then most of them will also oppose policies designed to restrict that behavior.

Student Support for New Policies

To examine this question, we conducted a Website-based survey at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire. We sent an electronic mail message inviting a random sample of 1,200 students to log on to the Website to complete the survey. A total of 496 students completed the survey, for a response rate of 41.3 percent.

We asked students to what extent they supported or opposed each of several policies



designed to reduce student alcohol problems and underage drinking. We next asked to what extent they thought other students at Dartmouth supported or opposed those options.

The pattern of results was clear. Whatever percentage of students indicated support for a particular policy option, an even smaller percentage reported that other students supported it.

In some cases, the disparity was sizeable. For example, 72.6 percent of the students favored the current prohibition against kegs in residence halls, yet only 34.0 percent stated that they thought other students supported this policy. Likewise, a majority of 54.3 percent supported using stricter disciplinary sanctions for repeated violations of campus alcohol policies, yet only 25.7 percent indicated other students would support this policy.

This pattern also extended to consideration of state or federal policy. For example, 44.9 percent of students favored increasing taxes on alcohol to help pay for programs to prevent minors from drinking, yet only 20.9 percent said other students would favor this increase.

Implications for Prevention on Campus

A number of colleges and universities are now using social norms marketing campaigns to correct the misperceptions that students have about drinking. The idea is that if students learn that most of their peers are not drinking heavily, they won't think they have to abuse alcohol to fit in.

Several schools have reported success with this type of campaign, with surveys revealing both more accurate perceptions of actual drinking behavior on campus and up to 25-percent decreases in reported heavy drinking after the campaign.

A social norms campaign helps establish the fact that there is a majority community that abstains or uses alcohol in a responsible way. We believe these campaigns should also communicate to students that the majority wants to see tougher policies and stricter enforcement.

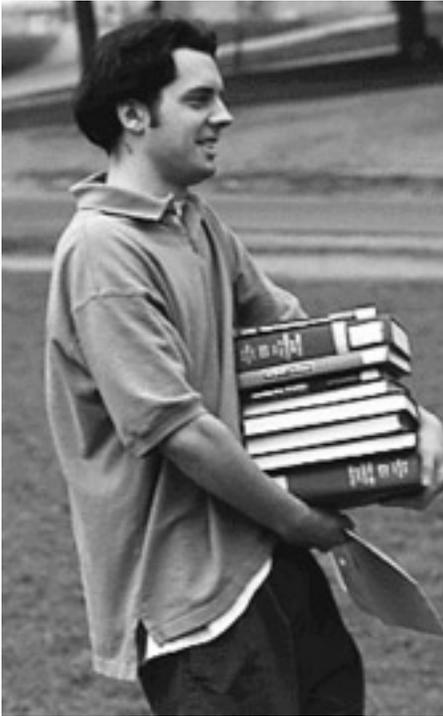
Getting out this broader message can accomplish several things:

- Students who think that some tougher measures are needed will learn that most of their peers agree. They are, indeed, a "silent majority." This knowledge should embolden them to speak out, which campus officials can directly encourage.
- Students will find it easier to serve on a campus task force or otherwise be active on this issue. It is important to remember that reporting the depth of student concern about alcohol problems on campus is not a substitute for soliciting student input about policy reforms.

- Having this information out will prompt administrators to implement new policies and beef up enforcement on campus. They can do so knowing that a majority of students are on their side.
- The protests of students who oppose the new policies will be more restrained. It's always possible that a small number of students will act out their anger inappropriately, but this will be less likely if they know that most students support the changes.

■

The pattern of results was clear. Whatever percentage of students indicated support for a particular policy option, an even smaller percentage reported that other students supported it.



Advancing a Policy Agenda

In sum, implementing new policies can go more smoothly if administrators correct the myth that most students drink heavily, reinforce the student majority's positive values, and demonstrate strong student support for certain reforms. Absent these efforts, students are more likely to think that most of their peers oppose rather than support these reforms, which in turn may provoke noncompliance and even open defiance.

Clearly, not all policy proposals will receive majority support, and the level of actual support for any particular policy will vary from campus to campus. The key here is for college officials to demonstrate where student support exists, to correct misperceptions about that support, and then to move forward with a policy agenda.

This does not mean that college presidents and other top administrators should never install policies that a majority of students do not want, but that whenever they can they should find and build on student support. Student surveys can help assess the true level of support across the entire study body, as opposed to hearing only the most vocal, and perhaps least representative, opinions. Over time, as the new policies take hold, and the rate of heavy drinking declines, student support may be found for even tougher policies that will protect the rights of the majority to a safe campus and reaffirm the campus community's positive values. □

A social norms campaign helps establish the fact that there is a majority community that abstains or uses alcohol in a responsible way.

William DeJong, PhD, is director and Linda M. Langford, ScD, is director of assessment and evaluation for the U.S. Department of Education's Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention, which is based at Education Development Center, Inc. John H. Pryor is director of undergraduate evaluation and research, Dartmouth College, and research assistant professor of community and family medicine, Dartmouth Medical School. The opinions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the U.S. Department of Education or Dartmouth College.

POLICIES THAT DARTMOUTH STUDENTS SUPPORT-AND THINK OTHERS WILL SUPPORT

Polices that Dartmouth students say that they personally "strongly support" or "support" compared with what they say are other students' level of support.

	Self	Others
Make all residences on campus alcohol-free	10.0%	2.3%
Enforce legal age restrictions on alcohol use	31.7%	13.4%
Eliminate "happy hours" targeted to college students	12.8%	3.8%
Increase taxes on alcohol to help pay for programs to prevent minors from drinking	44.9%	20.9%
Limit the number of alcohol outlets near campus	12.9%	2.9%

Patrolling Neighborhoods

By Laura M. Medalone and Joseph Cecile

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY is in the heart of an urban residential neighborhood. In the neighborhood adjacent to the university, commonly referred to as the East Neighborhood, approximately 31,000 people live in a variety of single-family and multi-family dwellings. It's also home to about 4,000 full-time university students.

A majority of off-campus students adjust well to community life and uphold the expectations of their surrounding environment. However, a significant minority of students consistently disturbs other residents in the neighborhood.

In recent years calls to the Syracuse Police Department increased dramatically in those areas with high concentrations of student residents. In the eight most popular off-campus streets, the number of police calls for disturbing the peace, fights, and noise

increased 83 percent, on average, from 1995 to 1997. In addition,

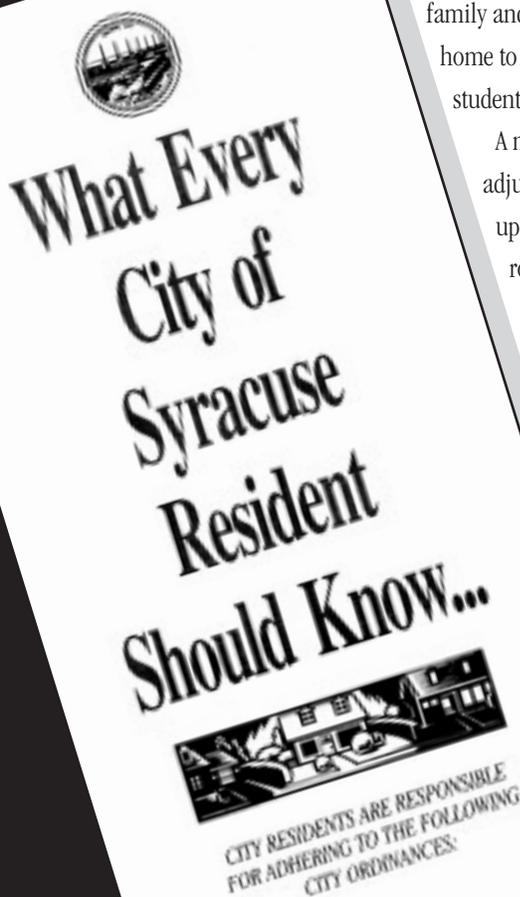
an alcohol-fueled riot occurred in this neighborhood in Spring 1998.

The city police department and the Syracuse University Department of Public Safety launched the Neighborhood Patrol Initiative in Fall 1999 to respond to problems in the East Neighborhood. NPI's goals are to improve the quality of life in the neighborhood surrounding the university; promote crime awareness and public safety, reduce underage drinking, and respond to city ordinance violations. This unit responds to parking and traffic issues, loud noise complaints, underage consumption of alcohol, and other community concerns.

Department of Public Safety officers respond to incidents at the request of the Syracuse Police Department. Their role is to document student violations of law and Syracuse University's Code of Student Conduct. Those who violate the Code of Student Conduct are referred to the University's Office of Judicial Affairs.

The patrol is part of a collaborative effort between Syracuse University and the city of Syracuse. The terms of this partnership not only include the NPI, but also increased emphasis on enforcement of laws dealing with underage drinking, increased educational programs for students related to living off campus, and increased emphasis on enforcement of fire and safety codes in the neighborhood.

For years Syracuse Police Department officers



for Prevention

One unexpected impact of the NPI is that the unit has become a deterrent for crime in East Neighborhood.

responded to loud party complaints, and, if warranted, issued an appearance ticket to offenders, which required that they appear in court and pay a \$25 fine. However, the fine represented little, if any, deterrent for students, especially those students who were charging an admission fee to the party. The result was frustration for the police officers who were responding to the same address week-after-week and even more frustration for permanent residents in the neighborhood.

NPI changed all of this by creating a method for holding students accountable for their actions. When the Syracuse police officers working the NPI investigate a complaint involving a Syracuse University student, they have the option of calling the University's Department of Public Safety officers, who assist in responding to the incident and in referring the

matter to the Office of Judicial Affairs

at Syracuse University. The Syracuse

Police Department also has discretion to seek other avenues.

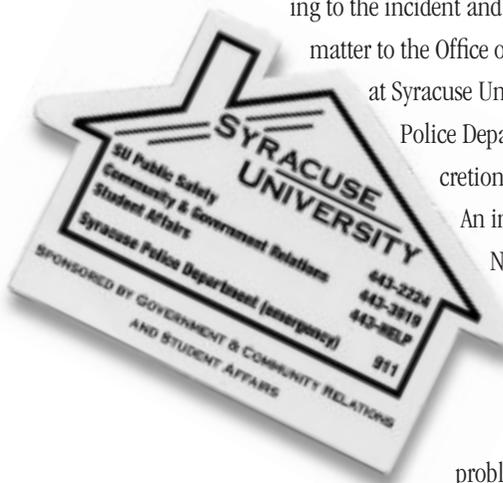
An important element of the

NPI is the Syracuse Police

Department's use of community policing officers. These

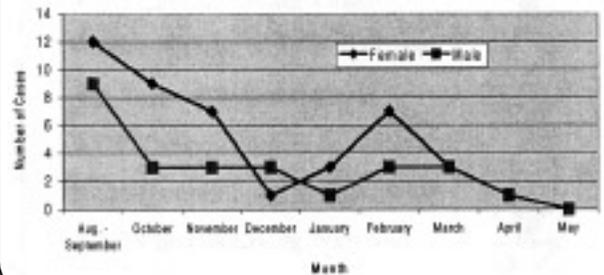
officers are trained in problem-solving techniques

and look for positive results, not



BEHAVIORAL OUTCOMES

Number of MISSHAP Cases Since August, 1999
Broken Down by Gender



MISSION



- To improve the quality of life in the University neighborhood.
- To promote compliance with city ordinances and other laws.
- To promote crime awareness and public safety.

STUDENT RESPONSES

- ◆ Upper-class students who have been documented for providing alcohol to underage persons have proven less inclined to accept intervention.

SU students protest police crackdown

The weekend off-campus patrols are an overreaction, a rally participant says.

SUCCESSSES



- ◆ Prompt response to identified problems.
- ◆ Reduced number of noise and alcohol related offenses.
- ◆ Students have reported they have learned from their mistakes and achieved a greater awareness of their responsibilities as members of the community.

SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY IN THE COMMUNITY

Living off campus builds on students' residence hall experience and offers the opportunity to belong to an even larger, more diverse community. This increasing independence brings with it new challenges and new expectations from other neighborhood residents.

The Syracuse University in the Community program assists students in making the transition to off-campus living. The program provides students with information on finding suitable housing, exercising their rights and upholding their responsibilities as tenants and as members of the community, and identifying where to get help with any questions.

For more information about the Syracuse in the Community program visit its Website at www.student.syr.edu/offcampusliving/.



Students complained that NPI efforts infringed on their rights.

statistics. For example, Syracuse police officers responding to a loud party call may decide, after speaking with the residents of the house, that no ticket or referral to the Office of Judicial Affairs is necessary in order to avoid a repeat offense. Perhaps the student was unaware that their neighbors might be elderly people or families with small children. Once informed of these facts, most students begin to understand their role as responsible members of the community.

One unexpected impact of the NPI is that the unit has become a deterrent for crime in East Neighborhood. In addition to responding to calls for service, Syracuse police officers patrol East Neighborhood in a marked police cruiser looking for suspicious persons and activities. As a result, East Neighborhood has experienced a drop in crime since NPI started. Even when a rash of residential burglaries plagued the area for two months, the burglars never struck when the NPI was on patrol.

During the first year of the program, a small minority of students—many of whom were seniors accustomed to unregulated behavior off campus prior to implementation of NPI—voiced concerns about the program and the

sanctions imposed on them by the university judicial system in response to their misconduct. Protests included several articles and editorial cartoons published in the student newspaper and a few small student demonstrations on campus. Students complained that NPI efforts infringed on their rights. Some students believed that regular police services and funding were being used less in favor of NPI.

But NPI has resulted in a number of positive changes for all residents of East Neighborhood. Police data indicate that the number of noise and alcohol offenses by Syracuse University students decreased over the course of the first year of implementation. Feedback from permanent residents of East Neighborhood suggests that they are benefiting from this program in terms of reduced noise and disorder, as well as prompt responses to identified problems. Moreover, students who have been referred to the Office of Judicial Affairs by the NPI for violations of the Syracuse University Code of Student Conduct, generally report that they have gained a greater awareness of their responsibilities as community members.

In addition to NPI enforcement efforts, Syracuse University has a number of educational initiatives aimed at helping students living off-campus be better neighbors. Such efforts include an off-campus living video, a door-to-door welcoming event, an off-campus student handbook, and an off-campus living Website. □

Laura Madelone is a judicial affairs counselor at Syracuse University. Joseph Cecile is with the Syracuse Police Department. For additional information about the NPI call Madelone at 315/443-3728 or e-mail lmadelo@syr.edu.

Reducing Alcohol Problems at Colleges and Universities

Through Alcohol Beverage Control

ARE STATE ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE CONTROL AGENCIES AN OVERLOOKED RESOURCE for reducing underage and high-risk drinking problems at colleges and universities? Participants in a symposium convened last Summer say that exploring state and local alcoholic beverage control strategies and effective alcohol control policies can lead to improvements in the quality of life and increased public safety on campuses and in surrounding communities.

Today's system of state alcoholic beverage control is an outgrowth of the repeal of national Prohibition in the 1930s. ABC agencies are regulatory agencies with the potential to be particularly effective prevention partners in reducing underage access to alcohol as well as high-risk drinking by college students. According to a recent report prepared for the U.S. Department of Justice, the right laws and regulations can minimize opportunities for young people to use alcohol and maximize the opportunities for effective enforcement and prevention.

To consider just what those laws should be for contemporary problem reduction on campuses and in surrounding communities, 40 researchers, educators, alcohol regulators, law enforcement officials, and public health experts met in San Diego at a symposium organized by the Higher Education Center on Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention.

Participants advanced a number of proposals that could lead to declines in problem drinking among college and university students and other youth, some of which have been effective with other populations.

For example, local community organizations can identify specific problems and set priorities leading to problem reduction.

Prevention coalitions can involve



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WHO CALLS FOR ALCOHOL ADVERTISING RESTRAINT

■ Gro Harlem Brundtland, MD, director-general of the World Health Organization, has called for "a concerted review by international experts of this issue of marketing and promotion of alcohol to young people."

The WHO European Charter on Alcohol adopted in 1995 explicitly states that "all children and adolescents have the right to grow up in an environment protected from the negative consequences of alcohol consumption and to the extent possible, from the promotion of alcoholic beverages."

In a speech at a WHO conference in Stockholm last February, Brundtland said: "Sadly, this is becoming increasingly difficult. Not only are children growing up in an environment where they are bombarded with positive images of alcohol, but our youth are a key target of the marketing practices of the alcohol industry."

"Over the past 10 to 15 years, we have seen that the young have become an important target for marketing of alcoholic products. When large marketing resources are directed toward influencing youth behavior, creating a balanced and healthy attitude to alcohol becomes increasingly difficult."

In addition, Brundtland said that governments should make alcohol a top priority on their health agenda and announced WHO's establishment of a special strategic advisory committee on alcohol to focus on this issue.

Today's system of state alcoholic beverage control is an outgrowth of the repeal of national Prohibition in the 1930s.

leadership from local hospitality associations, as in Nebraska, California, and New Zealand, where drinking problems have declined as a result of joint actions. Local town councils, neighborhood groups, and local police, with the support of ABC authorities, are natural allies to colleges and universities because of a shared desire to maintain the community's quality of life, including a commitment to public safety.

Several studies have shown that responsible beverage service programs, including management and server training, can reduce risks associated with sales and service of alcoholic beverages. However, gaining wide and effective adoption of such practices has been difficult. New findings presented at the symposium, based on systematic observations of bars and restaurants, question the effectiveness of both mandated and voluntary strategies for program implementation. Further investigation, including the value of adjunct media reinforcement and enforcement of serving laws, is warranted.

State ABC authorities have worked with exist-

ing higher education groups, such as state associations of colleges and universities, to garner support for prevention policies and enforcement through inter-agency coordination and development of coalitions, especially in Pennsylvania, Illinois, and Virginia.

For example, the Pennsylvania Liquor Control Board entered into

a partnership with the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Universities, which represents 112 presidents of institutions of higher education.

"As an alcohol beverage control agency, we have responsibility for both the supply and demand of beverage alcohol and are very actively involved with licensees and community organizations through our education and prevention efforts," said Steve Schmidt, director of the Bureau of Alcohol Education for the PLCB. "From our perspective, linking the community with the college is critical. We feel that our role in trying to solve the problem of inappropriate use of alcohol by college-age students is to facilitate communities and colleges to solve their complementary problems with this issue."

Information about the scope and nature of youthful drinking can be a powerful catalyst for change. One promising data collection method, described by a police chief with a large public university within his jurisdiction, is ASIPS (Alcohol-Sensitive Information and Planning System), a method for coding of all police calls for service to indicate alcohol or other drug involvement. Such information is

useful in assessing and addressing problem alcohol outlets and other problematic places of public drinking.

Symposium participants called for stronger national leadership in prevention of underage drinking problems to support state and local efforts. For example, one participant asked, "Why not a stronger alcohol plank in National Drug

Control Policy?" And participants generally agreed that ABCs get short shrift when it comes to resources.

"Why are our ABCs not fully funded?"

From our perspective, linking the community with the college is critical.

It's my firm belief that there's a lack of passion around the alcohol issue by both the public and our legislators," said Manny Espinosa, director of California's ABC Department.

In addition, symposium participants agreed that rewriting of state ABC codes is necessary to clarify over 60 years of

haphazard amendments. The current cumbersome language—in most states dating from 1934—misses an educational opportunity for licensees and the public that could be realized through "plain-speak" statutes and regulations.

The Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Prevention convened this symposium and will publish a proceedings report later this year on its Website at www.edc.org/hec/. The Center, created by the U.S. Department of Education in 1993, is a national resource for colleges and universities seeking to develop and maintain learning-conducive, safe, and healthy campus communities. The Center also receives supplemental support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation to organize a series of symposia such as this one. □



DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

■ Founded 18 years ago DARE—for Drug Abuse Resistance Education—is now taught in 75 percent of school districts nationwide and in 54 other countries, making it the most widely used drug prevention program. But now its leaders say that the strategy, which places police officers in classrooms to teach the program, has not had sufficient impact, so they are developing a new approach.

DARE's regrouping comes in the face of a growing body of research critical of the program's effectiveness, including recent reports from both the U.S. Surgeon General and the National Academy of Sciences saying that DARE's approach is ineffective. And several cities, most recently Salt Lake City, have stopped using the program.

In addition, in 2000 the U.S. Department of Education said it would no longer let schools spend money from its Office of Safe and Drug-free Schools on DARE because department officials did not consider it scientifically proven.

"Our feeling was, after looking at the prevention movement, we were not having enough of an impact," said Herbert D. Kleber, MD, the head of DARE's scientific advisory panel who is also medical director of the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University. "There was a marked rise in drug use. Our job was to answer the question, 'how can we make it better?'"

The new DARE program, which will emphasize a "social norms" approach aimed at reducing students' misperceptions about the prevalence of drug use, is being developed at the University of Akron in Ohio by Zili Sloboda, PhD, who when with the National Institute on Drug Abuse wrote a list of principles to guide drug-prevention programs. The program's development is underwritten by a \$13.7 million grant from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, based in Princeton, New Jersey.

TIME TO END ALCOHOL MARKETING IN SPORTS.

By George Hacker



FLIP ON MONDAY NIGHT FOOTBALL, check out television coverage of “extreme sports,”

follow the Bud blimp in the sky, or just knock up against a fancy Super Bowl display in the supermarket. One thing you can't miss is beer and its inextricable link to sports. The link, through advertising, sponsorships, and promotions, has permeated all levels of sport: pro leagues (most, if not all, leagues and teams have beer sponsors and advertisers), college athletics, amateur competitions, and international Olympic events.

There's method to this madness. Sports offer brewers access to the heaviest-drinking beer demographic, young men, which is crucial to maximizing sales and consumption.

Unfortunately, sports too often also hands those marketers the key to the hearts and minds of millions of children and teens who are beginning to form views of their relationship to alcohol and are starting to experiment with its use. According to the 2000 Monitoring the Future study conducted each year for the National Institute on Drug Abuse, 22 percent of 8th graders say they've consumed alcohol, and 8 percent say they've been drunk within the past year.

Once they're high school seniors, 50 percent have used alcohol and 30 percent say they drank five or more drinks on at least once occasion during the two weeks prior to the survey. No surprise then that the three leading causes

of death among 15- to 24 year-olds—automobile crashes and accidents, homicides, and suicides—are all heavily related to alcohol consumption.

There's method to this madness.

Sports offers brewers access to the heaviest-drinking beer demographic, young men, which is crucial to maximizing sales and consumption.

Brewers need that lucrative, underage market. Underage drinkers, on average, drink more heavily than adult beer drinkers and down about 10 percent of all the beer sold in the United States. Brewers also want to establish brand preferences among young drinkers because they could last a lifetime. Marketers acknowledge that “getting them young” is important to cementing brand allegiance. The National

Institute on Alcohol Abuse and

Alcoholism makes the same point from a different perspective: drinking at an early age vastly increases the likelihood of alcohol dependence and problems as an adult. Those who begin drinking by the age of 15 are four times more likely to become alcohol dependent than those who defer drinking until age 21.

THE TEAMS COALITION

Brewers say they follow voluntary advertising standards to avoid appealing to underage consumers. Their own ads, however, reveal substantial youth appeal. Recent television commercials for Bud Light, which aired during the Olympic games, featured prominent female athletes Lisa Leslie, a star in the WNBA and a member of the U.S. Women's Olympic Basketball Team, and Olympic Soccer star Brandi Chastain. Both athletes are highly recognizable to teenage girls and serve as role models for young women. Not so long ago, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms prohibited active athletes from alcohol ads, out of concern about the connection of drinking and athletic performance.

Too often such messages target audiences that contain large numbers and/or a high percentage of young viewers. Researcher Erica Austin, a professor at Washington State University, notes that decisions about "drinking . . . are made over time, and that young people are influenced by being exposed to ads since childhood." Austin concluded that beer marketers target youth. Donna Shalala, until recently Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services,

reached the same conclusion when she called on the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) in 1998 to end alcohol sponsorship and advertising in college sports . . . "Completely. Absolutely. And forever!"

Brewers say they follow voluntary advertising standards to avoid appealing to underage consumers. Their own ads, however, reveal substantial youth appeal.

Secretary Shalala, like many others, concluded that alcohol advertising affects youths' understanding of the role of alcohol in society and colors their perception of the relative risks and rewards of drinking. There's little question that young people, even children as young as six, pay attention to beer ads and enjoy them. In fact, an advertising industry survey found that Budweiser's frog ads were even more popular among children and teens than among adults. "Whassup?" Budweiser's popular, sophomoric greeting, has gained acceptance throughout the population and comes up

even in children's cartoons. Beer's message is getting through to underage people. Even the NCAA, under the leadership of Dick Schultz, recognized that beer ads appeal to young people when it decided, in 1989, to limit the number of such ads during telecasts of its "March Madness" basketball tournament games. For good reason. Approximately 75 mil-





lion viewers under the age of 21 watch the NCAA Final Four college basketball games. Oddly, the ads still appear during pre- and post-game shows and during telecasts of season games.

Nowhere does the message about drinking have as direct a pipeline to youths' interests and aspirations as in the combination of alcohol and sports. Glamorized images of alcohol use in connection with sports bombard our nation's youth with promises of healthful activities, athletic achievement, leadership, and role modeling, all but ignoring the many serious downsides of alcohol use. Many young people, who track the fortunes of sports teams and idolize athletes, can easily conclude that if they drink, they will be successful at sports.... and in life. Despite the illusory nature of that connection, the lure of the message is powerful and the medium of sports is persuasive. Pro-drinking messages saturate almost every sports environment, on billboards, in promotional materials, and in advertising, perverting the true nature of sport and, too frequently, targeting youth with engaging messages to drink. In the past, some

have attempted to address these problems. It is time to continue their work.

Center for Science in the Public Interest has created a new national campaign to reduce the promotion of alcoholic beverages to young people in America. TEAMS (Time to End Alcohol Marketing in Sports) is a national movement that will promote voluntary and governmental policies to reduce the association between alcohol marketing and sports. TEAMS will also work to promote positive sports role models for youths. Together with hundreds of organizations around America, we will challenge the connections between college sports and alcohol, question the exploitation of the youth-oriented Olympic games as a forum for alcohol marketing, and oppose the seduction of young people by slick television ads that incorporate sports themes or target substantial numbers of underage sports fans.

To join in this important new coalition, fax or e-mail a statement of support for TEAMS, with name of organization or group, contact person, mailing address, phone number and e-mail address to: Brian Hinman, Alcohol Policies Project, CSPI, Fax: 202/265-4954. E-mail: hinman@cspinet.org. More

TEAMS-PRIORITIES

- TEAMS will address many policy concerns, including:
- Matching alcohol ads with equivalent exposure of effective alcohol-prevention messages.
 - Prohibiting alcohol advertising in sports broadcasts aimed at large numbers of underage viewers.
 - Eliminating alcohol sponsorship and promotion of college sports events.
 - Reinstating the federal ban on active athletes in alcohol advertising.
 - Requiring responsible beverage service practices at all professional sporting venues where alcohol is sold.

information is available online at www.cspinet.org (click on Booze News) or by calling Brian Hinman at 202/332-9110, ext. 318. ☐

George Hacker, JD, is director of the Alcohol Policies Project at Center for Science in the Public Interest, Washington, DC.



Continued from inside front cover

were more likely to think that drinking alcohol would negatively effect their personality.

"Parents can make a difference even at this late stage of adolescent development," said lead author Rob Turrisi, PhD, of Boise State University in Idaho, in a Reuters dispatch. "The common bias is that adolescence is a time where parental influence is reduced and peer influence is critical. The data do not support the . . . notion that parents do not have an influence with their teens."

The authors say that certain conversations were more beneficial than others. For example, arguments based on rationale were more beneficial than fear-type appeals.

"If I had to speculate based on what I have seen in these data, I would say that there will be a number of instances where parent-teen conversation will make a difference, even for relatively difficult kids," said Turrisi.

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Marijuana: Gateway Drugs? Maybe Not

Common wisdom has long held that youths who started using alcohol or tobacco or both tended to move on to use drugs like marijuana and then on to hard drugs. But a new study found that young people using marijuana are less likely to move on to hard drugs than once believed, at least where kids born in the 1970s are concerned.

"The recent increase in youthful marijuana use has been offset by lower rates of progression to hard drug use among youths born in the 1970s," according to a report in the *American Journal of Public Health* (February 2001). "Dire predictions of future hard drug abuse by youths who came of age in the 1990s may be greatly overstated."

The study by the National Development and Research Institutes in New York City found that, unlike teens from past generations, there is little evidence that youths who started smoking marijuana in the 1990s would progress to hard drugs like heroin, cocaine, and crack later in life.

Andrew Golub, PhD, chief investigator of the study,

said that overall, children born between 1956 and 1971 who used marijuana before the age of 11 had an 80 percent chance of moving on to heroin, cocaine or crack. Those who started using marijuana in their teens had a 50 percent chance of progressing to hard drugs. The rate dropped to 20 percent for those who started using marijuana in their early 20s.

Growing up and out of the Drinking Environment

Even the most dedicated fraternity party-animals tend to drink less as they enter the workforce, get married, and have children, according to a recent study (*Psychology of Addictive Behaviors*, March 2001).

Lead researcher Kenneth J. Sher, PhD, a psychology professor at the University of Missouri-Columbia, thinks it's largely a situational effect in which the

fraternity house may create an environment where drinking is the "way of life."

The researchers surveyed 319 students during their four years of college, then again three years after graduation, asking how much they and their friends drank, how they felt about drinking, and what they thought were the effects of alcohol. The participants' academic performance and personality characteristics were assessed, including extroversion, introversion, and novelty seeking.

The study found that although fraternity and sorority members drank significantly more while in college than non-Greek students, they showed no cumulative effect three years after graduation, and they were not more likely to drink alcohol excessively.



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Ten Years Ago in *Prevention File* (Vol. 6, No. 2, Spring 1991)

ALCOHOL AND AGING: DRINKING PROBLEMS MAY EMERGE IN OLDER ADULTS

ONE OF THE TRUISMS OF MODERN LIFE is that the “golden years” are not always golden.

Illness, neglect, poverty, and loneliness can be the lot of aging men and women, and for some these years bring personal problems with alcohol.

Heavy drinking is less visible in the older population, but it is a source of risk to health and safety for many and a serious concern to their families. And with “the graying of America” the problem is sure to loom larger on the social agenda.

“Data suggest that untreated alcohol abuse among older persons is a more serious problem than has been previously recognized and it is likely to become an even greater problem as the ‘baby boom’ portion of the population ages,” says Enoch Gordis, MD, director of the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism.

The number of older adults in the United States doubled between 1950 and 1980. Eleven percent of the current U.S. population is over 60, and by the year 2030, one out of every four American will be 60 or over.

This demographic trend has made it imperative to know more about the health problems of older Americans, a consideration that led to the convening of the Surgeon General’s Workshop on Health Promotion and Aging in 1988. One important result of that gathering was a series of recommendations for dealing with alcohol problems among older persons.

The Surgeon General’s workshop took special note of the confusion over the issue of whether small or moderate amounts of

alcohol in an older person’s life may actually reduce the risk of heart attack and stroke. Some studies have concluded that moderate drinking (no more than two drinks a day) can have a beneficial effect, but others have contradicted it. The workshop concluded that more information is needed before a comprehensive public health policy can be established on the subject.

As matters stand, older Americans may be confused over whether daily drinking is good for them—or an invitation to dependence on alcohol or a potentially dangerous mixture of alcohol with prescription drugs.

Interestingly, studies of alcohol consumption based on self-reporting usually show that older adults drink less than those in younger age groups. Researchers suggest several explanations—among them the fact that retirees and other older people usually have less money to spend on alcohol than younger people. The changing metabolism that goes with aging can make older people more susceptible to the effects of alcohol. Those who consider themselves moderate drinkers in earlier years may find that consuming the same amount of alcohol leads to trouble as they grow older.

Falls are a common consequence of drinking by older persons. A study reported at a Detroit conference on aging found that 60 percent of older people who suffered spinal cord injuries in falls had been drinking within a few hours of falling. Most of the falls would be classed as minor accidents, like falling down a step or two.

“These falls wouldn’t even necessitate a trip to the emergency room if the people were younger,” said researcher Phyllis Graham of the Southeastern Michigan Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Institute. “But in the older, alcohol and aging combine to turn small falls into catastrophes.” □

Editor’s note: The U.S. Center for Substance Abuse Prevention has posted an educational tutorial on alcohol and other drug use and problems among older adults on its new Prevention Portal at www.preventionportal.org.

