



EXchange

Creating Solutions by Changing Environments

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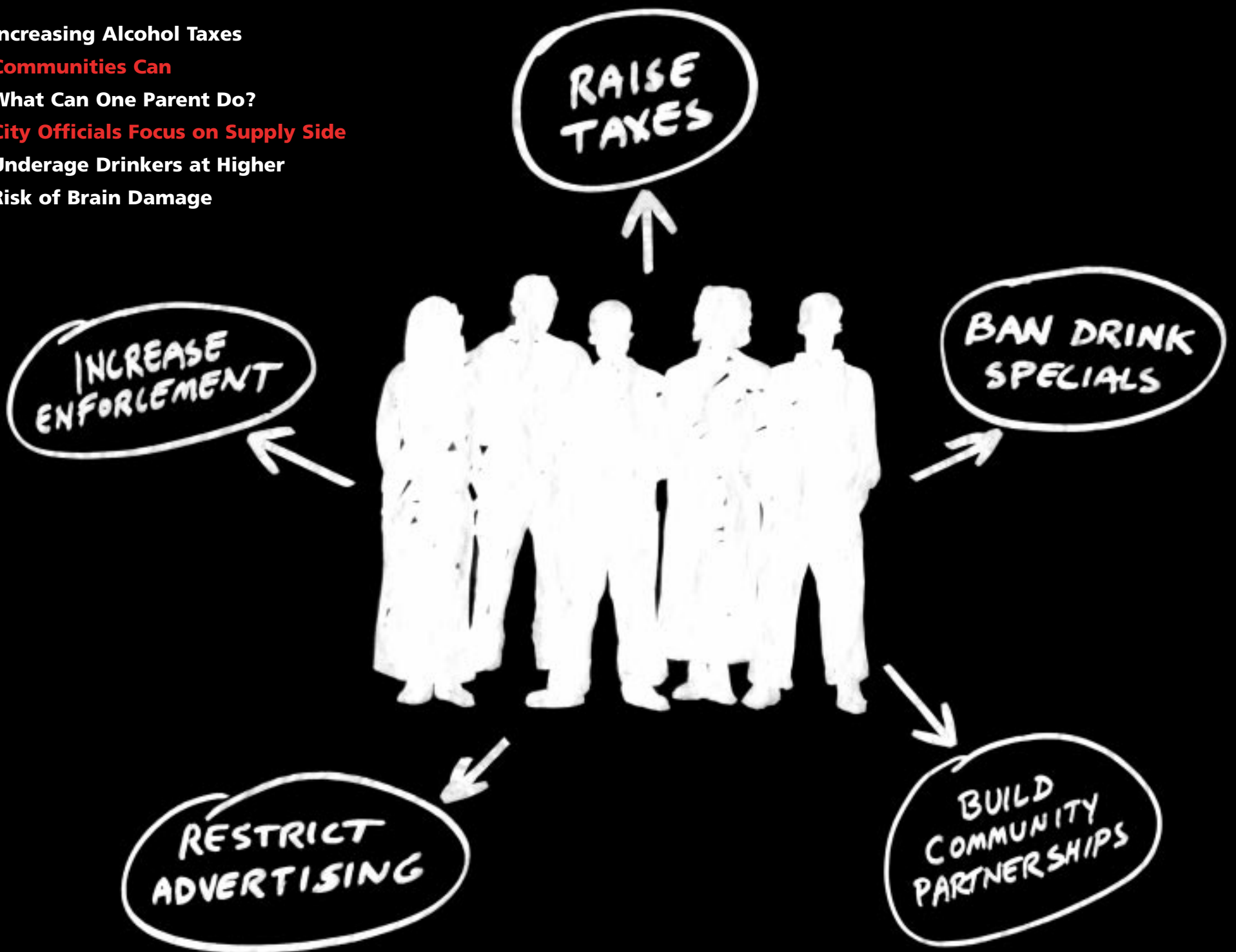
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Policy solutions help reduce under-age and high-risk drinking. Everyone has a role.

Increasing Alcohol Taxes: Preventing Youth Alcohol Problems and Helping States Solve Their Budget Woes

States are in fiscal crisis and are facing their worst budget problems since World War II, according to the National Governors Association. As a result, many states are now considering increasing alcohol excise taxes.

Historically, alcohol has been subject to excise taxes to reduce alcohol consumption and alcohol-related problems and to raise revenue for public purposes, including funding alcohol prevention and treatment programs. Numerous economic studies indicate that increasing alcohol excise taxes is one of the most effective means of saving young lives and reducing the incidence of chronic liver disease and cirrhosis deaths.

Raising state and local alcohol taxes makes sense because states and localities bear most of the burden of alcohol-related problems in costs associated with emergency medical services, health care, law enforcement and other services.

The relative cost of alcohol beverages and state taxes has dramatically declined in the past 50 years. Federal excise taxes on beer and wine have increased only once since 1951 and taxes in most states have lagged far behind inflation. As a result, state revenues have declined dramatically in terms of real dollars, costing states millions of dollars per year in lost potential revenues.

Here's an update on selected states and localities which have passed or are considering increased alcohol excise taxes.

Victories

Puerto Rico: Governor Calderon signed a bill (May 2002) increasing the excise tax on alcohol. Said House Speaker Viscarrondo: "Let's not lose perspective that raising the money from the alcohol tax will go back to the people in the areas of health."

Alaska: Alaska recently increased the excise tax on alcohol, the first such increase in 19 years. All alcohol is now taxed at \$0.10 per drink. The effort was spearheaded by the "Dime a Drink" coalition, which attracted some uncommon partners: Republicans and Democrats, Native Alaskans and non-Native Alaskans, conservatives and liberals. This broad coalition effort—led by a key Republican legislator, religious organizations, Alaska's Public Health Association, Alaska's Mental Health Trust and Mothers Against Drunk Driving's Youth in Action—helped convince the state legislature and the Governor to support the increase.

Pittsburgh: Mayor Tom Murphy (D) proposed a 10% sales tax on all alcoholic beverages sold within the city as a part of a larger plan to raise needed revenue. Pittsburgh faces a \$60 million 2003 deficit. The proposed tax, which has already passed the City Council, would raise an estimated \$10 million in revenue. To go into effect, it must be affirmed by the state legislature. The city has a strong supporter for the alcohol tax in new Governor Ed Rendell (D). As a past mayor of Philadelphia, he successfully implemented a similar sales tax on alcoholic beverages in that city.

Select Alcohol Tax Increases and Fees Proposed around the Nation (as of February 14, 2003)

Reducing Underage Drinking Through Coalition sites:

Connecticut: Governor John Rowland (R) has called a special session of the legislature to deal with the state's deficit. Among other items in the budget, the Governor seeks to double the state's alcohol excise taxes. The proposal would generate \$38 million, according to the Governor's office. The Connecticut Coalition to Prevent Underage Drinking is building support for this effort.

Georgia: Cathy Fink, co-chair of the Georgia Alcohol Policy Partnership, says raising the alcohol tax as proposed by the Governor is supported by the people of Georgia as was shown in a recent public opinion survey. Also, more than 50 percent of Georgians don't drink at all, so the alcohol tax increase would be paid mostly by the state's heavy drinkers who create most of the alcohol-related problems for the state.

Indiana: "Pennies Count"—a proposal to raise the alcohol excise tax in Indiana—would amount to less than a penny a drink or 13 cents per case of beer, 5 cents per bottle of wine and 26 to 61 cents for most bottles of liquor. Indiana currently spends 13 percent of its state budget to deal with substance abuse problems. The Mental Health Association and the Indiana Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking say Indiana is overdue for an increase: When inflation is figured in, revenue from alcohol taxes goes about half as far as it did in 1981, when alcohol taxes were last raised.

Louisiana: The Louisiana Alliance to Prevent Underage Drinking and the LSU Campus-Community Coalition for Change aim to reduce underage drinking and high-risk college drinking by having the legislature increase the alcohol excise tax by \$0.10 per drink to pay for prevention and treatment services in Louisiana. Louisiana has not increased its alcohol excise taxes since 1948. Beer is cheaper than juice and milk.

Minnesota: Minnesota Join Together has proposed a dime a drink increase in the alcohol tax to help fund treatment, prevention and law enforcement. Advocates hope that once the true impact of budget cuts is known, raising the alcohol tax will become a palatable alternative to draconian budget cuts. Supporters include the Minnesota Public Health Association, Minnesota Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Action On Alcohol and Teens, and the Minnesota Association for Resources for Recovery and Chemical Health.

Missouri: Missouri's Youth/Adult Alliance is still pursuing the goal of raising funds for underage drinking prevention, intervention, treatment and recovery. Representative Bill Deeken (R) has introduced legislation to increase the tax rate on beer from \$0.06 to \$0.24 per gallon; on wine from \$0.42 to \$0.78 per gallon; and on liquor from \$2.00 to \$4.00 per gallon. Proceeds would go into a new fund to reduce alcohol-related problems.

North Carolina: In July, Teresa Lee, immediate past president of the Women's Club of North Carolina, said in an opinion piece that raising the tax on each can of beer would produce \$83 million per year, which could help state and local governments avoid cuts in substance abuse treatment and prevention programs. The beer tax has not been raised since 1969 and inflation has eroded the tax by 80%. In a 1998 survey, 82% of North Carolinians said they support increasing the beer tax if funds go to substance abuse services. The campaign has a Web site, www.penniescount.org.



Oregon: A campaign, "Its only a dime," is pushing to raise the alcohol tax in Oregon to help pay for treatment and prevention. The increase would generate \$135 million. Nine percent of the state budget or \$278 per person is spent each year to deal with alcohol problems. In survey after survey, Oregon taxpayers have indicated that they support an increase in the beer and wine taxes.

Texas: The recently convened Texas Legislature is grappling with a possible \$10 billion shortfall. A study commissioned by Texans Standing Tall on the fiscal impact of raising alcohol taxes found that if state beer and liquor taxes were brought in line with the national average, the state would generate \$91 million in new revenue in 2004. The increased taxes would also lead to a modest reduction in alcohol consumption and abuse among underage youth who are most sensitive to price.

Elsewhere around the country:

California: Senator Gloria Romero (D-Los Angeles) has introduced legislation in the California General Assembly that would impose a \$0.05 per drink fee on wholesalers of alcoholic beverages to help fund emergency and trauma centers in the state. Another bill would establish a fee on alcohol producers based on each producer's share of the youth market. The revenues would be used to establish youth prevention and recovery centers.

Nebraska: Senator Dave Landis (D), Chairman of the State Senate Revenue Committee, has introduced legislation that would increase the alcohol excise tax rates to raise \$10 million annually for the general fund.

Nevada: The Governor's Task Force on Tax Policy has recommended an 89% increase in the state's alcohol excise taxes, which were last raised 20 years ago.

Ohio: Governor Robert Taft (R), facing a growing deficit (as high as \$10 billion), is considering an increase in alcohol excise taxes to bring in needed revenue for the state.

South Carolina: Senator Ralph Anderson (D) has introduced legislation to increase the excise taxes on beer, wine, and liquor. Fifty percent of revenues would be dedicated to health care for low-income families and 50% to the state's general fund. ●

The Center for Science in the Public Interest is tracking alcohol tax increase proposals around the country at its Web site: www.cspinet.org/booze/taxguide/TaxStateUpdate.htm.



Numerous economic studies indicate that increasing alcohol excise taxes is one of the most effective means of saving young lives and reducing the incidence of chronic liver disease and cirrhosis deaths.

Communities Can



By Richard Yoast, PhD
Director, American Medical Association Office of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse

For many years, the traditional approach to tackling the problem of underage drinking and high-risk drinking among college students focused on education and individual responsibility. But the alcohol prevention field has evolved to a more comprehensive approach. That approach assumes that this complex, societal problem requires a much broader sense of responsibility—i.e., beyond the individual and parents—and a strategy that focuses on all aspects of the environment, including policies, that can lead to positive change.

This issue of *Exchange* focuses on policies passed by coalitions of Reducing Underage Drinking and A Matter of Degree (The National Effort to Reduce High-Risk Drinking Among College Students).

Such policies are part of a comprehensive approach known as an environmental change strategy. This strategy creates policies, norms and laws, which affect entire groups of people where they live, work, go to school or play. Raising the drinking age from 18 to 21 years is a good example of a policy that reduced underage youth access to alcohol and has saved lives thousands of lives.

We focus on environmental change to reduce the harms caused by alcohol including motor vehicle crashes, school failure, injury and violence, and damage to physical, cognitive and social development of adolescents and young people. And, we learn more about that damage every day—this issue includes an article about the findings of a new research paper that indicates underage drinkers are at much higher risk of brain damage—possibly irreversible—than adults.

Underage drinking and high-risk drinking among college students are a public health epidemic. The average age of drinking initiation is now 11 years old, and 15 percent of 8th graders, 30 percent of 12th graders and 44 percent of college students binge drink. Alcohol-related problems are found throughout all sectors of the community. Because populations change over time, focusing on the environment reaches the entire population, tends to stay in place and acts over a long period of time, and needs minimal enforcement. But it requires widespread support and awareness. Environmental policies create a new standard of behavior. They make it easier for our children and young people to do the right and healthy thing and harder to do the wrong and unhealthy thing. These policies keep sending the same message and thus create new norms.

This environmental approach of implementing policies complements individual and educational strategies and promotes and enforces individual responsibility: youth, family, government and business. If we ignore this approach we let off the hook those who could create a healthier environment and those who benefit from an unhealthy environment—the alcohol industry.

In this issue, we put the spotlight on several policies that help reduce the harms caused by alcohol including:

- Raising local and state alcohol taxes, which reduces alcohol consumption by young people who are sensitive to higher prices and helps support prevention and treatment programs
- Working to eliminate alcohol advertising to reduce the demand for alcohol and the normalization of alcohol use by children and youth
- Increasing license fees for alcohol sellers to help pay for enforcement
- Tracking (registering) kegs to hold people accountable who purchase kegs
- Preventing the conversion of a business to an alcohol outlet

- Passing a compliance check law to make sure alcohol outlets are not selling to kids
- Changing laws, such as dram shop laws, to make them more effective

There are many other kinds of alcohol policies that can make a difference in the environment:

- Reducing access and availability of alcohol
- Reducing alcohol marketing and promotions
- Enforcing existing laws
- Eliminating or reducing alcohol sales at sports stadiums, festivals, state parks and state fairs
- Eliminating alcohol ads in campus newspapers
- Requiring training of servers
- Reducing density or preventing expansion of alcohol outlets
- Reducing BAC for drinking and driving to .08
- Increasing penalties for adult providers of alcohol to minors
- Parental notification of college students who violate alcohol policies and rules

Alcohol policies, which change the environment, not only reduce underage and high-risk college drinking, they also can lead to economic revitalization of communities. This has occurred in places like Newark, Delaware; Atlanta; Iowa City; Harrisburg, Pennsylvania; Raleigh, North Carolina; and Baton Rouge, Raleigh, for example, successfully worked to get state legislation approved that enabled the city to regulate the density of alcohol outlets.

Our successes in reducing underage drinking and high-risk drinking by college students result from our ability to build a cohesive movement by collaborating at every level—local, state and national—focusing the power, creativity and potential of people working together to create healthier and safer communities. Communities can. ●

What Can One Parent Do?

Our state has an average of 1,227 alcohol-related crashes involving underage drinkers every year.

also excluded from recovery. Under that interpretation, an aggrieved party is defined as "a person who sustains an injury as a consequence of the actions of the underage person, but does not include the underage person."

The Storch v. Winn Dixie ruling set a new precedent by stating that the parents of an injured or killed person could also be aggrieved parties:

"[W]e hold that a parent of an underage driver injured or killed as a result of such underage driver's negligent operation of a motor vehicle due to impairment resulting from the consumption of alcohol may be an 'aggrieved party' within the meaning of G.S. Sect. 18B-120(1) so as to have standing to maintain an action under the dram shop act if such parent suffers an injury as a proximate result of the negligent selling of alcoholic beverages to the underage person" (No. COA01-375, filed March 19, 2002).

The ruling upheld a September 2000 jury verdict in Cumberland County Superior Court.

Because of this ruling, businesses that sell alcohol to underage persons, who are killed because of the consumption of that alcohol, can be sued by parents to recover damages under the act up to the statutory limit, which is up to \$500,000.

In 2000, North Carolina experienced more than 4,000 driving while intoxicated arrests of persons under the age of 21 and almost 8,000 alcohol law arrests of underage persons. Our state has an average of 1,227 alcohol-related crashes involv-

ing underage drinkers every year.

From the beginning of this case, we were determined to make an impact and change the Dram Shop Law. We did not agree with the previous interpretation of a Clark v. Inn West ruling, which rejected a parent's claim for relief as aggrieved parties, even though the store and store clerk broke the law by selling alcohol to an underage person. With determination, persistence and the dedication of everyone involved in this case, we have now sent a new precedent and established new case law, for all parents and children in North Carolina.

We would like to thank many people for supporting us in this effort, especially NC Senator Tony Rand; the partners and staff of the NC Initiative to Reduce Underage Drinking; and all of the directors, supervisors, and agents from the N.C. Alcohol Law Enforcement Agency who stood by us and took a special interest in our case.

Congressman Mike McIntyre, who spoke at Jason's memorial said, "Many lives will be saved, and many lives will be changed, due to the persistence of the Storches. This truly shows how people and organizations that work together can impact the lives of everyone in North Carolina and the Nation." ●

City Officials Focus on the Supply Side in Newark, Delaware

Reacting to mounting pressure from residents, law enforcement, and business interests to do more about the consequences of alcohol abuse and its impact on the community, the Mayor of Newark, Delaware, established a commission in November of 2001. The Mayor's Alcohol Commission (MAC) was asked to study the issue and make recommendations on the role public policy should have in controlling alcohol-related problems.

The resulting report, finalized in March 2002, addresses (1) the culture of alcohol beverage consumption, (2) restaurants becoming bars, (3) the consistency and fairness of regulations, (4) underage drinking and over-consumption, and (5) negative behavior in the neighborhoods of Newark.

In the months since the report was issued, several actions have been taken and ordinances passed, reflecting the impact of the document. The Building Responsibility Coalition (BRC), funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, was well represented on the MAC. Although the BRC does not fully support all the recommendations, the campus/community-based group is gratified that Commission members, the Mayor and City Council now recognize that the suppliers, as well as the consumers, of alcohol must assist in reining in a growing epidemic of high-risk and underage alcohol consumption.

The BRC was established in 1996 to examine the alcohol culture among students on- and off- campus. As a result, The University of Delaware (UD) made significant changes in enforcement, sanctions and the role of parents in reducing the impact of alcohol abuse. Tailgating at UD athletic events was restricted, fraternities and sororities were held accountable for their alcohol-related behavior, the judicial system enforced a "three strikes and you're out" rule, and UD became the first school in the country to notify parents when their children were found guilty of alcohol policy violations.

Following the progress made by the university, the Mayor and Newark City Council supported several public policy initiatives to help neighborhoods and Main Street merchants control alcohol-related problems.

Ordinances recently enacted include:

State DABC Rules Adopted Locally

Since the State of Delaware does not have sufficient personnel to comprehensively enforce and adjudicate state alcohol laws, the Newark City Council adopted the Delaware Alcohol Beverage Control (DABC) rules, defining how alcohol licensees operate, into the city's municipal code. Newark police now have the authority to take violators to the local Alderman's Court for sanctions.



Real World: Actual promotional sign in Newark, Delaware aimed at University of Delaware students.

Increase in Business License Fees for Alcohol Sellers

The BRC principle that, "the costs of additional enforcement should be borne by those who sell, buy and/or use alcohol" is supported by the Newark City Council. The members voted to increase the business license fee of alcohol sellers to fund three additional Newark police officers to enforce the new DABC program. Implicit in this action is the understanding that higher prices will lower consumption without adversely impacting retailer profits. Since considerable controversy has erupted over the action, the city council has scheduled a workshop to review the license fee formula.

Happy Hours Restricted

At its September 2002 meeting the Newark City Council voted to restrict happy hours citywide to the hours from 4 pm to 9 pm. Research shows that low-cost alcohol encourages over-consumption, especially among young people. The new happy hour limits cater to working people and prohibit late-night drink specials geared to the college crowd.

The BRC assists the work of the elected city officials through its Policy and Enforcement Task Group that examines public policy initiatives and makes recommendations. Recently, the task group reviewed open container regulations and submitted a draft ordinance to city officials.

In addition, the BRC donated four ID scanners to assist the Newark Police Department in enforcing underage drinking laws. The sophisticated devices detect false IDs by reading the magnetic strip or bar code on the back of drivers' licenses.

The Newark Police Department announced that through a grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP), five more officers will patrol the streets of Newark during the weekends. The BRC paid for an ad in the University of Delaware student newspaper, *The Review*, to draw students' attention to the additional enforcement and remind them to act responsibly, particularly in light of increased patrols.

"The mission of The Building Responsibility Coalition to reduce the harm caused by high-risk drinking on campus and in the community of Newark has been advanced by the willingness of city officials to look at both the supply and demand side of the problem," states Tracy Bachman, program director of the BRC. ●

Community Partnerships Can Win The Day: or, How We Saved a Neighborhood Institution

By Will Jennings

(Will Jennings received his MFA from the University of Iowa where he now teaches as a Lecturer in the Rhetoric Department.)

My wife and I purchased our Iowa City home in the autumn of 1997 when I became an adjunct faculty member at the University of Iowa. Built in 1896, it's a modest house with "character" set in the middle of other similar homes along a cobble brick and tree-canopied street on the near-north side. We chose this neighborhood—comprised of both families and students—because we'd be within walking distance of movies, music, grocery stores, and a river-runs-through-it city park. We would also be close to Pearson's, a throw-back drugstore where you could browse the magazines while they filled your prescription, and stop back at the soda fountain for an egg salad sandwich with a Green River or Pony Malt on the side. The homey constancy of this place suited us just fine.

Small town or not, you don't get to live in a neighborhood close to a large campus without having to deal with another recurrent theme. On four and sometimes five nights each week, from about 10pm until 3am, the neighborhood becomes something of a "flyway" between where students live and where the alcohol flows. And flows for a significant profit. Shouts, loud music, honking horns and boom-box cars, sporadic verbal and physical assaults, the vandalism of private property, saplings uprooted or limbs torn, bottles smashed or left leaning on stoops, porch furniture stolen or dragged into the parkway and set to smolder. Some mornings the streets look like beaches left to litter and abandoned by the tide.

Last year, only weeks before the start of the fall term, our local pharmacist decided to pull the plug on his storefront. The shock of this loss reverberated throughout the entire city. People had been coming to Pearson's for its milkshakes and medicines for decades and could hardly picture its handy corner location as an empty lot, or perhaps something even worse. Within days, the local papers reported a deal worked out with a regional grocery chain based in central Iowa. Hy-Vee would transfer many of the pharmacy's employees and its accounts to their branch drugstore some two miles away. And the plans didn't stop there.

One hundred miles away, Hy-Vee's corporate spokesperson announced the organization had studied the site's location and our neighborhood's demographic. Its conclusion was that a Regal Liquor Store would be an ideal replacement for the former soda fountain.

Those of us who actually lived in the neighborhood instantly took exception to their conclusions. Recent development along a nearby thoroughfare had brought 1,000 or more new undergraduate student renters into the neighborhood and the overwhelming majority of these were under 21 years of age. Actions by the City Council to curb underage drinking in downtown bars raised the distinct possibility that many students would be seeking alternative locations for buying and consuming alcohol. There are already more than 90 places to buy alcohol within one mile of campus, and this site would be within four blocks of half the dormitories and a sizeable off-campus population. Hy-Vee had done their homework very well, indeed.

Public reaction to the pending loss of a landmark and the unwanted gain of a liquor store was predictable. Neighbors began to plot impromptu strategies: a petition, a picket line in front of the chain's nearest store, letters to every editor with a paper to print, and calls to the local television stations appealing for coverage of the protests. All well and good, except that similar well-practiced responses have an alarming tendency for producing The Valiant Defeat. Umbrage and outrage from abused citizenry win their share of media minutes, but quickly pass and are dropped in favor of the next new thing. And, in the end, you get stuck with the liquor store.

A petition speaks to numbers, and the grocery people already had the numbers that mattered regarding profits. Pickets are a one-day news story. A line of even 50 people looks tiny framed against a five-acre parking lot full of shopper's cars. And for just how many days can you count on a large picket line to show?

The Northside Neighborhood Association quickly realized the value of an alliance built from community, professional, business, church, social service, and University members. The University of Iowa's Stepping Up Project and a very decisive President Mary Sue Coleman were first to join the effort. Within a week, an Organizing Committee was convened and our work began in earnest. Talking points were developed and honed. Media relations were streamlined and put into motion. Legal venues were explored and important connections were made with a broad-based, ecumenical coalition of community resources. A Web site was created to post community perspectives, significant updates, and all correspondence from the grocery chain's CEO and corporate communications office. Television, radio, and print media frequently called upon committee members for updates and quotes, and the talking points began to find their mark.

Instead of a picket line of 50 that would soon fade, or a petition of perhaps a few hundred signatures, the opposition to the proposed liquor store now included: The University of Iowa Administration and its Student Senate, The Domestic Violence Project, The Rape Victim Advocacy Program, faculty in The School of Social Work, a wide array of local social service professionals, emergency room physicians from the local hospital, local clergy from four different denominations, many Parent Teacher Organizations, all of Iowa City's active Neighborhood Associations, the north side business owner's organization, and members of Iowa City's City Council.

Hy-Vee is a grocery chain with Iowa roots, and it makes a consistent and sincere effort to be a solid corporate "citizen." It contributes to many local causes and its local store managers are given a unique level of latitude in how they distribute such support within their individual neighborhoods and communities. Hy-Vee's most recent contribution to the Northside of Iowa City came with its decision not to purchase the site of the former Pearson's pharmacy and to drop plans for installing the liquor store.

Today, the site has been bought by a locally owned and well-thought-of movie/DVD rental store. And the good news is that the store has maintained the old soda fountain as a place where locals can still gather to chat over egg salad sandwiches, Green Rivers, and about as perfect a malted milk as you'll find this side of the Mississippi.

As the new fall term begins, the north side neighbors are again anticipating the return of alcohol-related problems. But we've learned something about effectively organizing for change, and we're making headway. This September several thousand welcome packets were distributed door to door with coupons for neighborhood businesses and a list of community services available to all. We also make it clear that we are a neighborhood of families, workers, and professionals—both young and old—and that our quality of life depends upon the contributions of all. The coalition of neighborhood, community, and University members was crucial to this small victory. We are also quite clear that these partnerships continue as our best hope for future success. ●

A Matter of Degree Projects Receive Grant Renewals

Two community/campus coalitions—PACE at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Stepping Up at the University of Iowa and Iowa City—have received four-year grant renewals from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation under the program, A Matter of Degree: The National Effort to Reduce High-Risk Drinking Among College Students.

PACE was awarded \$468,000 and Stepping Up was awarded \$466,729.

PACE (Policy, Alternatives, Community, and Education) will target four major policy issues aimed at changing the environment and culture around campus alcohol:

- Limiting late-night drink specials
- Exploring parental notification for certain violations
- Addressing the dangers of house parties
- Clarifying and publicizing university policies and expectations of student conduct

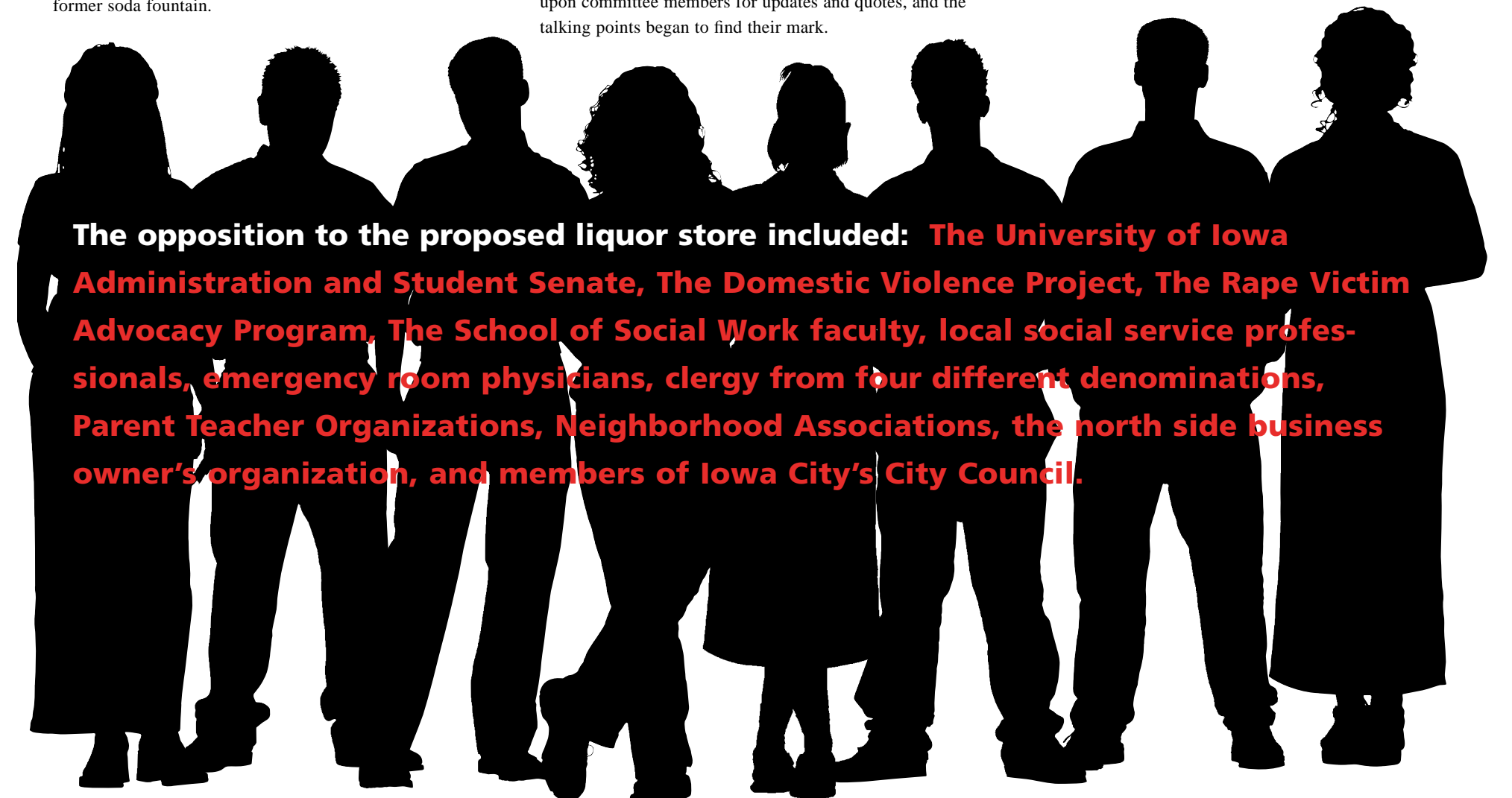
Stepping Up is working on several environmental objectives, including:

- Restricting access to alcohol by raising the age of entry for bars to 21
- Changing the image of downtown Iowa City by limiting the density of alcohol outlets in the central business district
- Holding landlords responsible for alcohol-related disruptions on their properties
- Continuing support for increased social alternative activities for students and young people

Both projects, begun in 1996, are among 10 campus/community partnerships funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and administered by the American Medical Association. ●



Tracy Bachman, Building Responsibility Coalition, University of Delaware; Susan Crowley, PACE, University of Wisconsin-Madison; and Thomas Workman, NU Directions, University of Nebraska-Lincoln presented a poster on campus-community partnerships and strategies to address high-risk drinking at the 16th National Meeting on Alcohol and other Drug Abuse prevention in Higher Education held last November in Seattle. Their session was one of four presentations on A Matter of Degree at the meeting.



The opposition to the proposed liquor store included: **The University of Iowa Administration and Student Senate, The Domestic Violence Project, The Rape Victim Advocacy Program, The School of Social Work faculty, local social service professionals, emergency room physicians, clergy from four different denominations, Parent Teacher Organizations, Neighborhood Associations, the north side business owner's organization, and members of Iowa City's City Council.**

Underage Drinkers at Higher Risk of Brain Damage than Adults, American Medical Association Report Reveals

AMA Challenges Television and Cable Networks to Stop Airing Alcohol Ads to Youth



the alcohol industry's aggressive marketing to youth as one of this trend's key drivers, the AMA is calling on cable stations and television networks to publicly pledge to stop airing alcohol commercials to youth. The brain report findings and the pledge request were unveiled at an AMA meeting in New Orleans on December 9, 2002.

"After NBC announced their plans last December [2001] to run hard-liquor ads, the AMA successfully lobbied the network to reverse this ill-advised decision," says Dr. J. Edward Hill, chairman of the AMA. "One year later, the alcohol industry is just as aggressive in pursuing underage minds through television, and television is all too willing to comply. This is out of step with public health and public opinion."

A recent nationwide poll conducted for The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation found that nearly 70% of Americans favor a ban on television liquor ads and 59% support banning beer commercials on television. The AMA pledge calls on networks and cable television not to air alcohol ads on programs that air before 10 p.m. or that have 15% or more underage viewers. The pledge also calls on networks and cable television not to broadcast alcohol commercials depicting mascots, cartoons, or other characters targeted to younger viewers.

"It's time TV executives and the alcohol industry stop profiting at the hands of those most harmed by drinking," says Hill. "This report reminds us of how important it is to protect our children during these crucial early years of development instead of filling their growing brains with the misleading notions that drinking is normal and without consequence."

The AMA report on the effects of alcohol on the brains of adolescents takes note of a study comparing magnetic resonance

imaging of the brains of 14- to 21-year-olds who abused alcohol with those of non-drinkers. That study found that drinkers had about 10% smaller hippocampi—the area of the brain that handles memory and learning. Researchers call such a reduction significant and possibly irreversible.

"Our brains go through important transformations during adolescence," says Sandra Brown, Ph.D., chief of psychology services at the Veterans Affairs Medical Center in San Diego and whose brain research is included in the report. "This study shows that alcohol use during the adolescent years is associated with damage to memory and learning capabilities as well as to the decision-making and reasoning areas in the brain."

According to Brown, alcohol takes a greater toll on brain development of those under 21 than on any other age group. Findings indicate that adults would have to consume twice as many drinks to suffer the same damage as adolescents and that even occasional heavy drinking injures young brains.

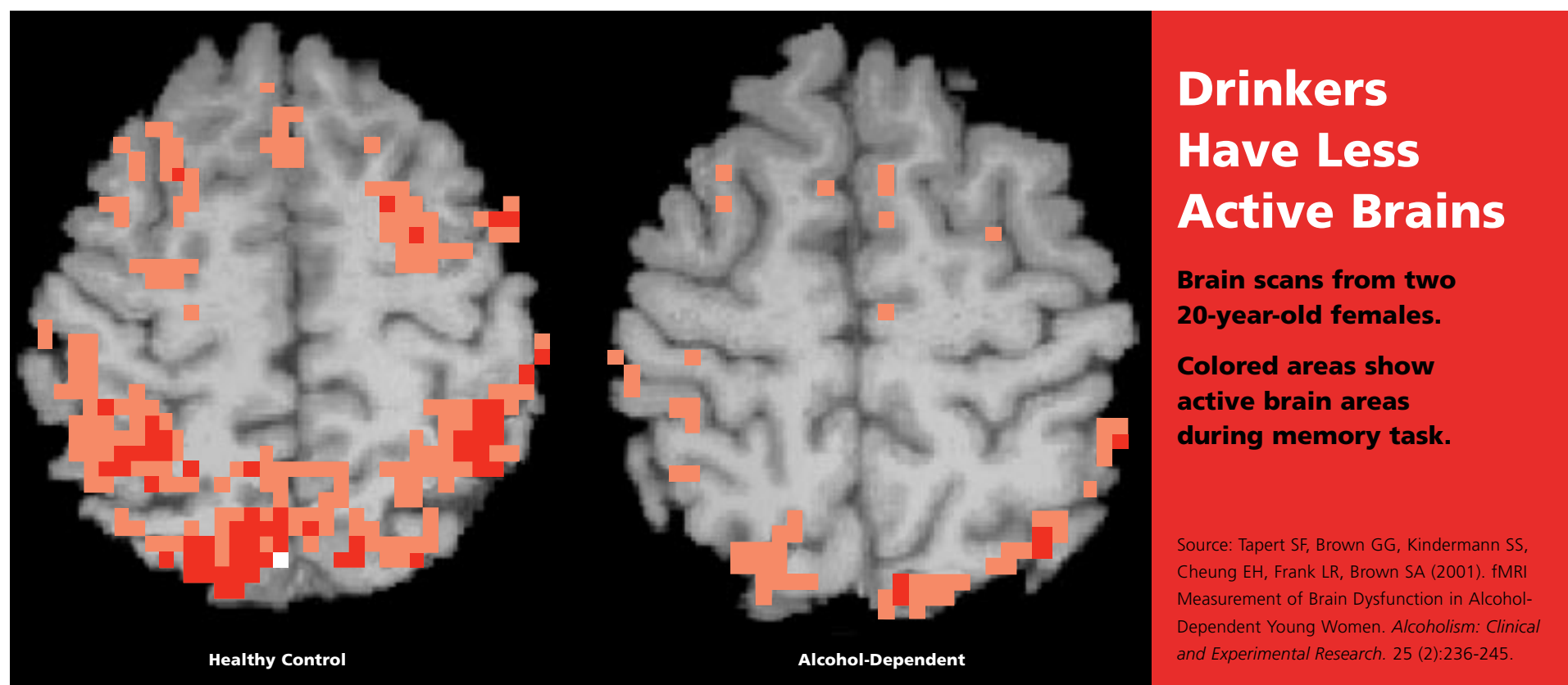
The AMA report also shows adolescent drinkers scored worse than non-users on vocabulary, visual-spatial, and memory tests and were more likely to perform poorly in school, fall behind and experience social problems, depression, suicidal thoughts, and violence.

To reduce underage drinking and support prevention, education, treatment, and alcohol control policies, the AMA also advocates increases in state and federal excise taxes on alcohol. According to the AMA, revenue from the increases could help states cover budget shortfalls to pay for alcohol programs. Previous alcohol tax increases have been shown to be very effective in reducing underage alcohol abuse. ●

For more information, visit www.alcoholpolicysolutions.net.

The findings of a new American Medical Association (AMA) report on the effects of alcohol on the brain dispel the myth that youth are more resilient than adults to the adverse effects of drinking. *Harmful Consequences of Alcohol Use on the Brains of Children, Adolescents, and College Students* is a comprehensive compilation of two decades of scientific research on how alcohol alters the developing brain and causes possibly irreversible damage.

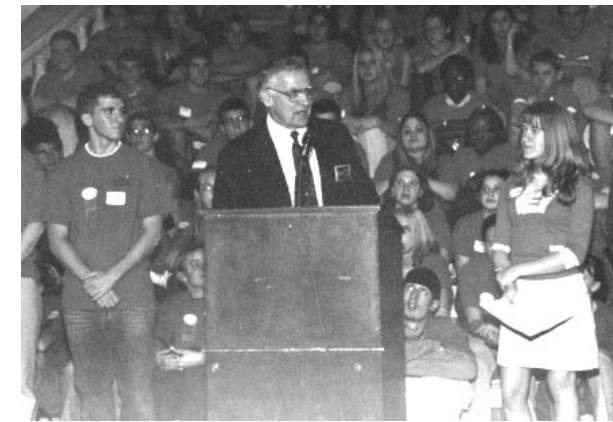
On average, children now try alcohol for the first time at the age of 12, and nearly 20% of 12- to 20-year-olds report being binge drinkers (having four to five drinks in a row). Citing



81% of Americans support alcohol tax increases for prevention purposes • 67% of Americans support banning liquor ads

Source: "2001 Youth Access to Alcohol Survey," a national opinion survey of more than 5,700 adults.

Recipe for Success



Representative Paul Clymer asked members of Pennsylvanians Against Underage Drinking to bring students to the Capitol to give his colleagues a youthful perspective on the solutions to the problems of underage drinking.

By Representative Paul I. Clymer
Pennsylvania House of Representatives

What would you get if you took 600 drug and alcohol free kids, mixed them with 250 state legislators, and stirred? In Pennsylvania, we got an alcohol compliance check law.

Okay. It really took several years of hard work, two Youth Rally Days at the Capitol, over a dozen Youth Congresses around the state with legislators and other community leaders—and lots of dialogue in the form of e-mails, letters, meetings, editorials, phone calls, and letters to the editor.

Because of the way our age-of-sale law for alcohol was written, Pennsylvania was one of a handful of states where it was illegal—until the passage of our new law—to conduct alcohol compliance checks like those we were already doing for tobacco. We couldn't verify whether people were checking identification. We weren't sure they weren't selling alcohol to kids. This inconsistency motivated my colleagues in the Pennsylvania Senate and House to pass the alcohol compliance check law unanimously in the final hours of the

legislative session last year. The law became effective at the beginning of February.

Pennsylvania is unusual in that we have a 23-month legislative session. Thousands of bills are introduced during that time, and it's easy for any single proposal to get lost in the blizzard of paper that hits our desks daily. What made the proposals to reduce youth access to alcohol stand out to my colleagues and to me were the voices of teenagers.

We often hear from adults about what kids need. We don't often hear from the kids themselves. They helped us understand the problem of underage drinking as it is for them today, every day, and not as it was for us years—and sometimes decades—ago. They live in a world where they are bombarded by messages to drink; messages to convince them that drinking goes hand-in-hand with popularity, athletic prowess, and generally enjoying life.

Alcohol abuse is our number one drug problem. When 45,000 Pennsylvania students were surveyed in 2001, more than 61% said that they had tried alcohol. Words cannot begin to convey the damage this does to our children—the loss of innocent life and life-threatening injuries resulting from underage drinking, not to mention the suffering of families.

The voices of older Pennsylvanians came through loud and clear in a survey conducted in 1999 by Mathematica Policy Research for Pennsylvanians Against Underage Drinking. Nine out of ten Pennsylvanians surveyed favored compliance checks to ensure that bars, clubs, restaurants, and beer distributors check identification when making alcohol sales. Nearly seven out of ten favored allowing underage youth to work under police supervision to conduct these checks.

By establishing a program of alcohol compliance checks, the members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly are hoping to cut off one of the sources of alcohol for kids—commercial providers. If kids can't get alcohol, they won't drink alcohol. We don't want to see our most precious natural resource in Pennsylvania, our children, polluted by either alcohol or tobacco. ●

10 Things

I Hate About Underage Drinking

- 1 I hate when adults buy alcohol for kids.
- 2 I hate when adults let kids drink at their homes.
- 3 I hate when adults say underage drinking is okay as long as we aren't driving.
- 4 I hate when people don't call 888-UNDER-21 to report underage drinking.
- 5 I hate when adults buy kegs for kids.
- 6 I hate when ads try to get me to drink and the way movies make drinking look cool.
- 7 I hate when businesses sell alcohol to kids.
- 8 I hate when adults say, "At least it's not drugs. It's only alcohol."
- 9 I hate when kids say, "I drink because everybody does." I don't drink. I don't smoke. I don't do other drugs.
- 10 I hate the way I feel when my friends drink. It scares me.

Top 10 list as seen on T-shirts of youth advocates rallying for a compliance check law in Pennsylvania.

Indiana Corks the Flow from Kegs

Underage drinking advocates in Indiana celebrated their victory with kegs. These kegs, however, were empty. The Indiana Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking celebrated the passage of Keg Tracking (SB97) with more than 200 students and adults who were attending the statewide (Students Against Drunk Driving) SADD conference.

The coalition met with legislators to educate them and raise awareness about underage drinking and two legislators took up the cause and authored the Keg Tracking bill. Through the hard work, perseverance, and dedication of coalition members, the bill was passed into law and signed by the Governor in March 2002. Students were very instrumental in getting the law passed, with more than 60 young people contacting the chairman of the committee that heard the bill. So many, in fact, that keg tracking was the second issue he heard most about during the session.

The law will go into full effect in July and will hold persons accountable who purchase kegs for the purpose of providing

alcohol to minors. If a keg is ever found where underage drinking has taken place, the keg can be traced back to the purchaser through identifying information provided at the point of sale and that person will be held accountable for the alcohol. "Holding suppliers of alcohol responsible for their own actions is a major component to the successful reduction of underage and illegal use of alcohol. Those who provide alcohol to minors are put on notice: no more!" said Dee Owens, coalition board member and Director of the Alcohol and Drug Information Center at Indiana University. Tammy Loew, Alcohol Risk Reduction Coordinator of the Student Wellness Office at Purdue University and coalition board member agrees. "Research confirms that keg tracking, along with other strong state policies, reduces high-risk and underage drinking among college students. It's a win-win situation for all of us," she said. ●

Please contact Lisa Hutcheson, project director, at 317-638-3501 for more information on how the coalition passed keg tracking.

States That Have Keg Registration

California	New Hampshire
Connecticut*	New Mexico
Georgia*	North Dakota
Indiana*	Oregon*
Kansas	Pennsylvania*
Maine	Rhode Island
Maryland	South Dakota
Massachusetts	Vermont*
Minnesota*	Washington
Nebraska*	

*Reducing Underage Drinking Through Coalition or A Matter of Degree sites

AMA Testifies at Institute of Medicine on Underage Drinking

The Board on Children, Youth and Families of The National Academies' National Research Council and Institute of Medicine has formed a committee to develop a strategy to prevent and reduce underage drinking.

The committee is reviewing existing federal, state and non-governmental programs, including media-based programs, designed to change the attitudes and health behaviors of youth. The review also includes programs that focus directly on behavior change as well as those designed to change underage drinking behavior through reduction of adolescent

access to alcohol (such as through increased excise taxes, aggressive enforcement of age and identification checks, and restriction of alcohol on college campuses).

As part of its review, the committee held a public hearing last November featuring key stakeholders and experts in the alcohol prevention and treatment fields. Among those testifying was Dr. John Nelson, secretary-treasurer of the American Medical Association.

He urged the committee to include several recommendations in its final report: A call on the Federal Trade Commission and appropriate Congressional committees to hold hearings

to investigate the impact of alcohol advertising and marketing on underage drinking; more research on the harmful effects of alcohol on adolescents and the effectiveness of physician screening, intervention and prevention approaches; increased alcohol excise taxes to delay and reduce alcohol consumption by young people; and, funding for counter advertising. Nelson's testimony is available for viewing at www.alcoholpolicysolutions.net

The committee is expected to issue its final report in late spring. ●

New Studies of Interest

Binge drinking is on the rise in the United States and is climbing fastest among 18- to 20-year-olds—who are not of legal age to drink—and among 21- to 25-year-olds, according to a survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The study, which was published in the January 1, 2003 issue of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, found that those aged 18 to 20 went on drinking binges an average of 15 times in 2001. It also showed that episodes of binge drinking – defined as having five or more drinks in a sitting – increased 17% among all adults between 1993 and 2001. The study is available at: www.jama.com.

Binge drinking habits can be acquired or avoided in college among students who did not do so in high school, according to new findings from the Harvard School of Public Health College Alcohol Study. The study concludes that reducing the uptake of college binge drinking may require efforts to limit access/availability, control cheap prices and maximize substance-free environments and activities. More information about the study is available at: www.hsph.harvard.edu/cas/Documents/uptake.

One quarter of alcohol advertising on television in 2001 was more likely to be seen by youth than adults, according to a report released by the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at Georgetown University. Of the more than 208,000 alcohol commercials on television in 2001, underage youth, aged 12 to 20, were more likely than adults of legal drinking age to have seen more than 51,000 of those commercials. The study is available at: www.camy.org.

New Web site: Solutions for Reducing Underage and College High-Risk Drinking

There is a new resource to help youth, parents, universities, policymakers, and others who are seeking solutions to fight alcohol abuse by underage youth and college students.

The Web site, www.alcoholpolicysolutions.net, features information about two national programs funded by The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation—Reducing Underage Drinking Through Coalitions, and A Matter of Degree: The National Effort to Reduce High-Risk Drinking Among College Students. The site also includes alcohol policy and media advocacy strategies, research, and reports such as “Partner or Foe: The Alcohol Industry, Youth Alcohol Problems and Alcohol Policy Strategies.”

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www.alcoholpolicysolutions.net

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