



Parents Are Heroes

A Newsletter of the **Making Sobriety Attractive** (MSA) Program, a SAMHSA-funded Drug-Free Communities Project for Kent County,

"80% of teens who believe their parents disapprove, do not drink alcohol"

Presented by www.ALERTLabs.org of Michigan

Supported by the Kent County Prevention Coalition and Mothers Against Drug Driving

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In this issue:

- **Raising Alcohol Taxes to a Level Equal to Other Commodities Would Help Pay for the \$68 Billion-Plus in Consequences of Underage Drinking – AND Reduce Harm to Our Children**

Previous Parent Newsletters at alertlabs.org/newsletter.php

PARENTS OF CHILDREN with Alcohol and Other Drug Problems: Alanon Meeting, Monday at 7:30 p.m. Mayflower Church (call: 361-5227)

Just ONE QUESTION can help a doctor or parent to identify dangerous drinking: "How many times in the past year have you had X or more drinks in a day?" (X=1+ for teens, 4 for women, and 5 for men.) An answer of even one time indicates "unhealthy" use. See

***Journ Gen Intern Med* Published online March 12, 2009. <http://cme.medscape.com/viewarticle/589706?src=cmenews&uac=98100FT>**

A review of 14 previously published studies finds that occasional binge drinkers

Increasing the Price of Alcohol by 50% Through Excise Taxes Would: Reduce Underage Drinking by 32.5%, Heavy (Binge) Drinking by 21%, Youth Traffic Deaths by 15.5%

Higher prices for alcohol also reduce rates of brain damage to teens, which results in reduced cases of lifelong learning and behavior problems, and reduced incidences of homicide, suicide, domestic violence and child abuse, plus traumatic injury, drowning, burns, high risk sex, fetal alcohol syndrome (FAS), alcohol poisoning, vandalism, and need for treatment for alcohol use disorders. Given the great rewards for their children, about half of the States in the country tried last year to pass bills to increase prices through excise increases, most of which will go to the prevention and treatment of alcohol disorders, though some will go to highways and similar needs. http://www.marininstitute.org/site/images/stories/pdfs/wa_prevention_summit09.pdf

Why did only six states succeed (Kentucky, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, Illinois, North Carolina)? The Governor of Wisconsin, who opposed increased taxes, was probably most candid of those who objected, saying that his state makes beer and wants its citizens to drink. He apparently did not see the advantages that could have accrued to his citizens in health, safety, and quality of life, or the extensive savings in underage drinking costs in justice and corrections, healthcare, law enforcement, etc. Perhaps it is his attitude that helped lead to an 80% binge drinking rate among students in the University in Madison? Also, BIG ALCOHOL spent millions of dollars to scare ordinary citizens by claiming that the increased tax would hurt the low income and middle class drinkers the most – a false charge.



Joe Sixpack does NOT drink as much beer as Banker Jones! The lower a community's average income, the less members of that community drink. To find the heavy drinkers, look to the most affluent neighborhoods. For teens, the heaviest drinkers are those who have part-time jobs and affluent parents.

Cleaning up the wreckage: Big Beer spent \$710 million last year to tell us all that drinking alcohol is the most fun a young person can have for around \$10.00. Those of us who want to protect children from that advertising can only appeal to parents to help their teens to resist.

Also, alcohol advertising never tells us how much we, the adult taxpayers, have to pay to clean up the wreckage caused by the product on which they make huge

-- those who consumed five or more drinks at a sitting at least 12 times per year, but were not daily heavy drinkers -- were 45 percent more likely to develop coronary heart disease than those who only drank in moderation (one or two drinks daily).

American Journal of Epidemiology, Feb 18, 2010.

Ongoing research around the country is illuminating what some have long suspected. "Exposure to outdoor alcohol advertising around schools is associated with subsequent youth intentions to use alcohol" (Pasch, et al. *Outdoor Advertising Near Schools*).

The ALERT Labs

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profits: A recent study of *underage drinking* arrived at a national cost of **\$68 Billion** (with a "B") in 2007. That price included \$7.4 billion in medical costs (an increase of \$2 billion since 2006), \$14.9 billion in work loss and other resource costs, and \$45.7 billion in lost quality of life/pain and suffering. www.pire.org/detail2.asp?core=38160&cms=179%20.

Problem	Total Costs (in millions)
Youth Violence	\$1,669.8
Youth Traffic Crashes	\$253.6
High-Risk Sex, Ages 14-20	\$129.8
Youth Property Crime	\$100.2
Youth Injury	\$68.2
Poisonings and Psychoses	\$13.4
FAS Among Teen Mothers Age 15-20	\$32.6
Youth Alcohol Treatment	\$84.7
Total	\$2,352.300

Underage Drinking Costs in Michigan, 2007, Topped \$2.3 Billion.

In spite of the consequences to us, national and local politicians fear the wrath of Big Alcohol and love its political contributions (over \$700 million at the federal level last year), and continue to refuse to increase taxes. In Michigan, the tax rate on Beer has been \$.20 per gallon since 1966, and has not been increased for 44 years, though taxes on every other commodity have risen almost annually.

Michigan taxpayers are stuck with about 90% of the costs of underage drinking even AFTER the alcohol industry pays its taxes (about \$333 million in 2008). See more for our and other states: www.udetc.org/UnderageDrinkingCosts.asp.

CLICK HERE TO TAKE ACTION IN YOUR STATE. Email your State

Representative/Senator: (1) Select Michigan on the Map, then (2) Select Join the fight against underage drinking in your state and (3) write an email urging our legislators to increase taxes on alcohol and use the funds raised to prevent underage drinking and provide prevention, intervention and treatment for our children. <https://secure2.convio.net/madd/site/Advocacy?id=165&page=UserAction>

DID YOU KNOW?

The MSA project has reduced underage drinking and therefore has also reduced the consequences* of alcohol use:

- Driving a car under the influence is down by 64.5%.
- Having unwanted sex/sexual contact is down by 56%.
- Getting into a fight or argument is down by 43%.
- Getting into trouble with Police is down by 41%.

*All of these figures are statistically significant; the reductions could not have happened by chance.

MSA Schools in Kent County have much lower rates of underage drinking than the norm for Michigan:

- 43% had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more occasion in the past 30 days. In MSA Schools, only about 29% are in this category.
- 25% had five or more drinks of alcohol in a row (i.e. binge drinking) in the past 30 days. In MSA Schools, only about 19% are in this category.

*In both cases, MSA figures have shown a statistically significant 19% decrease since 2006/07.

The 2,452 Michigan teens admitted for treatment in 2007 is only 15% of the total that NEED Treatment. Teenagers account for 9% of all treatment admissions for alcohol abuse in the State (www.udetc.org/UnderageDrinkingCosts.asp)!

