



# PRAIRIE RIDGE

## PREVENTION SERVICES

Contents:

- Alcohol Awareness Month
- Alcohol Abuse Affects Everyone
- Facts About Underage Drinking
- “Keeping Our Future Growing: End Underage Drinking”
- Questions & Answers
- Upcoming Events

**“CLEAN MIND; CLEAN BODY; CLEAN SPIRIT; DRUG FREE”**

**National Alcohol Awareness Month**  
**April 2007**

## Newsletter

**Vol. 2 Issue 4**  
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**Got A Minute?**

### Alcohol Abuse Affects Everyone

*By Rolena Hadwiger, MPH, CHES*

Alcohol abuse is prevalent within many demographic groups in the United States. Often, when people think of alcohol abusers, they only picture teenagers sneaking drinks at unsupervised parties. That is not the case however, people who abuse alcohol can also be:

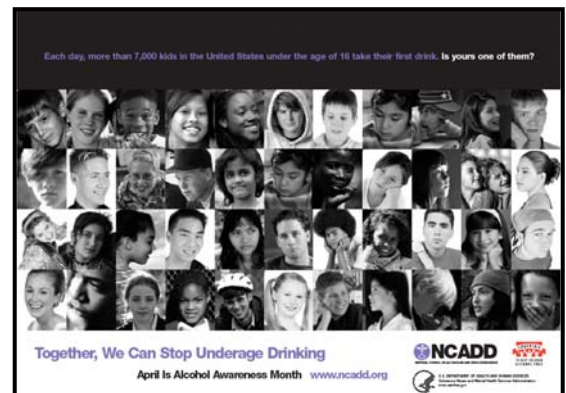
- College students who binge drink at local bars.
- Pregnant women who drink and put their babies at risk for fetal alcohol syndrome.
- Professionals who drink after a long day of work.
- Senior citizens who drink out of loneliness.

To recognize the serious problem of alcohol abuse, April is designated as the “Alcohol Awareness Month.” It is sponsored by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence since 1987 to encourage local communities to focus on alcoholism and alcohol-related issues.



**Each day more than 7,000 kids in the United States under the age of 16 take their first drink.**

**Is yours one of them?**



### Warning Signs of Alcohol Abuse

If you answer “Yes” to any of the following questions, you may have a problem with alcohol:

- Does your drinking worry your family?
- Do you drink alone when you feel angry or sad?
- Have you failed to do what was normally expected from you because of drinking?
- Have you ever drunk more than you meant to?
- Have you been unable to remember what happened the night before because you have been drinking?
- Have you needed a drink in the morning to get yourself going after a heavy drinking episode?
- Have you tried to cut back on your drinking but could not?

Source: SAMHSA

Alcohol Awareness Month began as a way of reaching the American public with information about the disease of alcoholism - that it is a treatable disease, not a moral weakness, and that individuals with alcoholism are capable of recovery.

### Facts About Underage Drinking

- 1) Alcohol plays a key role in accidents, homicides and suicides, and is the leading cause of death among youth.
- 2) Alcohol is linked to as many as two-thirds of all sexual assaults and date rapes of teens and college students.
- 3) The consequences of underage drinking are a tremendous expense to the U.S. economy and total more than \$53 billion per year.
- 4) Children who begin drinking before the age of 15 are 5 times more likely to develop alcohol problems than those who start after age 21.
- 5) The typical American young person will see 100,000 beer commercials before he or she turns 18.

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## “Keeping Our Future Growing: End Underage Drinking.”

The prevalence of underage drinking is so appalling that it should urge individuals and communities to take action. According to the National Survey of Drug Use & Health (NSDUH) in 2004, an estimated 10.8 million people aged 12 to 20 reported drinking alcohol in the past month. In Iowa, 67% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed have used alcohol and 41% are currently using (Iowa Youth Survey 2005). For some people, this may just be rates, but for others, these rates represent youth who need help.



The risks involved in underage drinking are:

- poor academic performance
- risky sexual behavior
- violence
- illicit drug use
- death
- other harmful behaviors

**Alcohol kills six times more young people than all illicit drugs combined.**

--Healthy Kentuckians 2010, Cabinet for Health Services

Research has shown that youth who “use alcohol have higher rates of academic problems and poor performance than non-drinkers”<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, drinking alcohol can impair one’s judgment which can lead to impulsive decisions. For example, anyone who drinks and drives is making a poor decision that impacts their safety and those around them. For youth, traffic crashes are the number one killer (Traffic Safety Facts, 2003). According to the Drug Abuse Warning Network, an estimated 142,701 alcohol-related emergency department visits during 2004 were made by patients aged 12 to 20.

Furthermore, alcohol use by youth is a strong predictor of sexual activity, unprotected sex, illicit drug use, drinking and driving, etc. One out of 18 youth aged 18-25 who reported having sexually transmitted disease in the past year also reported having engaged in binge drinking (SAMHSA, 2005 NSDUH). In short, as alcohol use increases, so does the sexually transmitted disease incidence.

Protecting our youth has always been everyone’s responsibility; for they are the hope of the future. Research shows that youth credit their parents as a major factor in their decision not to use alcohol, tobacco, or other drugs<sup>4</sup>. Thereby, parents can help youth by maintaining open communication and expressing a clear and consistent message about underage drinking. Underage drinking is not acceptable and it is not safe.

### References:

<sup>1</sup> Cigarettes, Alcohol, Marijuana: Gateways to Illicit Drug Use, Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, Columbia University, 1994.

<sup>2</sup> Institute of Medicine National Research Council, Reducing Underage Drinking A Collective Responsibility, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (NCADD), 2006.

<sup>4</sup> National Institutes on Drug Abuse (1998). Drug Abuse Prevention Through Family Intervention. Rockville, MD: NIDA

### Questions & Answers:

**Question:** How easy is it for kids to get their hands on alcohol, either at home or elsewhere?

**Answer:** In 2005 Iowa Youth Survey, 74% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders surveyed answered “easy and very easy” to get alcoholic beverages in their neighborhood or community (38% of 8<sup>th</sup> graders and 15% of 6<sup>th</sup> graders consequently). According to the American Medical Association Poll on Teen Sources of Alcohol, 2 out of 3 youth, aged 13-18 said, it is easy to get alcohol from their homes without parents knowing about it. 1 out of 4 youth has attended a party where minors were drinking in front of a parent.

**Question:** What if my youth does not want to talk to me about alcohol or other drugs?

**Answer:** Never give up trying. Perhaps there are other adults with whom your youth is more open to talking about alcohol or other drugs. This is where the responsibilities extend to the community—teachers, neighbors, other family members, prevention professionals, etc. We have to remember that we have allies out there when it comes to these issues. Utilize them and also set a good example.



**April 16-19, 2007** Adolescent Prime for Life at Prairie Ridge, Mason City. The program will be from 4:00-7:00 p.m.

Monday through Thursday day. For more information please contact our office.

**May 14-17, 2007** Adolescent Prime for Life at Prairie Ridge, Mason City. The program will be from 4:00-7:00 p.m.

Monday through Thursday. For more information please contact our office.

**May 19, 2007** Diversion Program at Prairie Ridge, Mason City. The program will be from 8:30-5:30 p.m. Saturday. For more information please contact the Prairie Ridge Mason City Office 1-866-429-2391.

For more information about any of the events, please contact us by phone or e-mail as shown below.