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Persuasive Summer Liquor Ads Sell Fun, But At What Cost?

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Toasting summer with glasses of whiskey. Photo via Pixabay

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By Peyton B. Harrison Jr.

Take a look at any beer or liquor manufacturer’s social media page this summer and it becomes obvious the industry giants are working hard to convince us that their product belongs in every recreational aspect of our lives.

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The well-known red, white and blue cans are seen in pictures with bikini-clad young women at the beach and captions tell us to have our best times with beer. Other ads show beer as part of a backyard barbecue, seemingly stating that simply being outdoors for a summer meal with friends or family is not enough. Alcohol ads are boldly plastered across race cars and baseball stadiums or at other such popular sporting events.

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time for a refreshing Mike's Hard Lemonade," touts the advertisement.

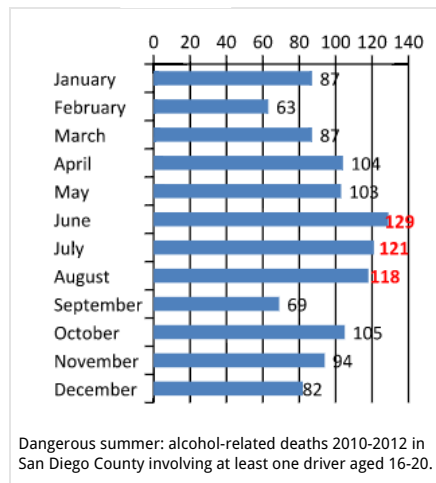
Contrary to the advertisements, the truth is that there are plenty of occasions when it is not a good time to bring along the booze. The alcohol industry is gearing up for summer advertising campaigns and we must also pump up our prevention efforts this summer to protect our number one treasure: our children.

Studies reveal that alcohol advertising and promotion increases the likelihood that adolescents will start to use alcohol and to drink more if they are already using alcohol.

Alcohol is the top drug of choice and the leading contributor to death from injuries, which are the main cause of death for people under age 21. This includes nearly half of all fatal teen automobile crashes according to the [National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse](#). Most of these crashes occur during the summer months of June, July and August, according to the National Institutes of Health. This holds true in San Diego County.

San Diego County had 744 alcohol-involved collisions with a fatality or injury during 2010-2012, where at least one driver was under age 21, according to the statewide Integrated Traffic Records System database. These collisions involved 1,162 victims who were killed or injured. The summer months of June, July and August saw the highest number of crashes each year.

Even so, many still cling to the belief that underage drinking is an inevitable "rite of passage" and that youth are so determined to drink that no prevention effort can ever be truly successful. Some also believe that underage drinking need not be harmful as long as it is supervised and/or the youth are not allowed to drive while intoxicated. They argue that young people can easily recover from any physiological harm from the alcohol because their bodies are more resilient than those of adults.



However, studies show just the opposite: the brain changes dramatically during adolescence and its development can be seriously inhibited by alcohol consumption. This damage is often long-term and irreversible. Even short-term or moderate drinking impairs learning and memory far more among youth than adults. Adolescents need to drink only half as much as adults to suffer the same negative effects.

Research also indicates that neither underage nor binge drinking among youth is inevitable. To the contrary, the prevalence of underage drinking can be reduced through policy changes at the state and local level.

Such local policies are key to protecting our youth. Lawmakers throughout San Diego County made it a priority by adopting social host laws to prevent underage drinking at social gatherings. It has always been illegal to provide alcohol to those under 21 and social host laws make it illegal to provide a place for them to drink, such as a home, hotel

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Peyton B. Harrison Jr.

room or limousine. A “social host” is anyone who has a gathering of three or more people on property they own, lease or otherwise control. Hosts have a duty to keep alcohol away from underage guests, control the quantity of alcohol provided, and to verify ages of guests consuming alcohol.

Violators can incur fines and fees of up to several thousand dollars, including in some cases enforcement costs and

medical responder cost of calls for service. This is something to keep in mind while the alcohol industry giants are pumping persuasive alcohol advertising this summer, encouraging us all to “Grab Some Buds” at our favorite summer social gatherings.

Peyton B. Harrison Jr. is a licensed drug and alcohol counselor and anger management counselor. He resides in Spring Valley.

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