

Dear Community Members of Menomonie:

In view of Chancellor Sorensen's letter addressing the extensive abuse of alcohol in our city, especially among college students, I have begun to compile research related to alcohol consumption on college campuses. I have found that here are proven strategies that may be implemented to reduce binge drinking and the dangers than accompany it.

As many as two in five college students engage in binge drinking, with the heaviest drinking days being Thursday, Friday and Saturday. Research supports that the implementation of certain environmental policies can have a significant influence upon a college community.

Secondhand affects of alcohol abuse strain a community's resources. Students who attend college in areas with more alcohol control policies are less likely to engage in binge drinking, and therefore the risks of harming themselves and the second hand affects of alcohol abuse are reduced. Policies that can be implemented include keg registrations, restrictions on Happy Hours, limiting the number of alcohol suppliers in a given area, and higher taxation on or an increase in price of alcohol, as well as public intoxication and sober server ordinances.

These policies need to be population-based approaches that involve incremental change for all community members. We need to incrementally shift the drinking behavior of the majority in order to dramatically change the behavior of the heaviest drinkers.

It is important to focus on the community as a whole in order to make a measurable change that will yield the greatest public health benefit. The city of Madison is in the process of establishing a sober server ordinance, and the city of La Crosse has implemented a public intoxication ordinance to help combat the alcohol issues they have faced in their own college communities. The La Crosse Police Department has not only noticed a downward trend in public intoxication, but also the same trends in all other alcohol-related violations.

Considering the high number of alcohol-related student deaths on our campus in the past few years, it is more important than ever to address this serious issue in a timely manner. We have the power, as community members, to make these changes possible and to make our community a safer place for all.

Now is the time to make a change in our community, a change that will affect our community in a positive for many years to come.

Sincerely,

Meghan Lehman

Prevention Assistant, Arbor Place

Menomonie