



Joining Forces

It's not your typical Friday night at a Milwaukee, Wis., police station. A fidgety 17-year-old boy stands in front of a group of officers, wondering how he'll survive the next few minutes. But instead of defending himself over some teenage prank, his nervousness stems from public speaking. This teen is a *Youth In Action* member asking a group of police officers about to begin their weekend shift to enforce the Zero Tolerance Laws designed to keep his peers from drinking alcohol and from drinking and driving.

Nationwide, more and more teens are realizing they have a role to play in preventing the needless deaths and injuries of their friends due to underage drinking. In Raleigh, N.C., two 15-year-old girls are at their neighborhood market, not trying to buy beer but actually placing stickers on six- and 12-packs of beer that warn of the consequences of purchasing alcohol for those under the age of 21.

In Glendale, Calif., under the watchful eye of law enforcement officers, a 17-year-old boy is outside a convenience store asking adults to buy him alcohol. Those answering "yes" receive a card outlining the laws and penalties for furnishing

alcohol to someone under 21; those answering "no" receive a card thanking them for refusing to provide alcohol to a minor.

In Colby, Kan., a 21-year-old who could pass for 16 is working with her local police department to ensure IDs are being checked and alcohol is not being sold to minors. If the clerk doesn't ask for ID and makes the sale, the police can cite or arrest the store clerk.

And this is not happening just in these cities or by only a few young people. Activities like this are taking place all across the country, led by an army of youth taking action to prevent underage drinking. In fact, they are *Youth In Action*.

Teen Issues Call for Teen Solutions

MADD's youth-led *Youth In Action* teams remain one of the organization's most successful programs combating underage drinking. Launched in 1996 with six pilot sites, MADD *Youth In Action* has grown to more than 60 sites nationwide, with the establishment of 20 new teams currently under way.

Varying in size from small community teams consisting of three youth activists to statewide teams composed of

hundreds of youth, *Youth In Action* is a scientific, research-based program involving environmental strategies that target the source of underage drinking and encourage enforcement of the underage drinking and impaired driving laws.

But the real key to the program's success is the partnership of youth and adult community leaders who are helping create social, retail and political change regarding underage drinking.

Through this partnership, *Youth In Action* teams are able to conduct specific prevention projects such as Compliance Checks and Alcohol Purchase Surveys to identify which alcohol outlets will sell to minors without checking for proper identification. Shoulder Tap Surveys educate adults about the laws pertaining to providing and purchasing alcohol for a minor. Roll Call Briefings and Law Enforcement Recognition Events recognize officers who go out of their way to ensure that underage drinking is not tolerated and that laws are enforced.

Teens are trained on media advocacy skills, generating media attention and creating media-savvy presentations. Using the information gathered through their projects, *Youth In Action* teams work with the media to get the word out about their community's underage drinking issues—a crucial component to reducing underage drinking, because the community is informed of current compliance rates and local statistics, and they are being held accountable.

Here's a Twist: Teens Thank Cops

One of the most intriguing aspects of *Youth In Action* is Law Enforcement Recognition events where youth show their support. At the events, youth acknowledge the hard work done by law enforcement officers by recognizing exemplary officers in their community for the enforcement of underage drinking laws.

To recognize officers, *Youth In Action* teams ask the chief of police to nominate officers who have made the most arrests for underage drinking, illegal purchases or sales of alcohol to minors, and zero tolerance violations. Other times, the community's youth identify a school resource officer who handles underage drinking violations in schools.

The recognition events often are held in conjunction with Zero Tolerance Briefings to not only thank officers but encourage them to consistently enforce the laws. Many times, teens secure donated food from a local restaurant or grocery store and hold the events during a breakfast where



they recognize the officers. They sometimes also hold an event for general recognition of an entire police department where certificates of appreciation are presented.

Sonya Manfred, youth coordinator for MADD Tennessee, says, "Our youth love the Law Enforcement Recognition events. They hold an open forum where the police officers ask the youth questions. The youth give them honest answers about the underage drinking they see in their daily lives, and their recommendations for how to best tackle this issue in the community."

Online Action

Youth In Action teams now have a new lifesaving tool—www.youthinaction.org. Funded by a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice and Juvenile Delinquency Prevention, the interactive and educational Web site promotes *Youth In Action* with cutting-edge, youth-oriented themes. The Web site also promotes critical interaction between teens and adults involved in the program as well as those interested in becoming involved.

Packed full of helpful information such as current underage drinking news stories and legislation alerts, the Web site also features *Youth In Action* activities taking place across the country, personal stories, detailed project descriptions, a collection of different team photos, and a section where individuals can write to their state senators or representatives.

With the Internet as a teen's preferred method of research and entertainment, the new *Youth In Action* Web site allows

MADD to expanded its reach and expand the number of youth activists who want to reduce underage drinking at the local, state and national levels.

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Youth Working for Youth

Youth In Action is not just a program name. It truly is youth taking action in preventing the No. 1 youth drug problem. Led, created and conducted by youth who work side by side with community leaders, *Youth In Action* teams work one by one to save their peers and to make their communities safer for everyone.

To learn more about *Youth In Action* or to get involved, call 1-800-GET-MADD or visit www.youthinaction.org.