

- 1** Focus On Freshmen:
How to Survive the Transition
without Alcohol Problems
- 3** Q&A with Connie Pechmann
- 5** MADD National Youth Summit
Comes Home to Orange
County
- 7** Tustin's Youth Action Team:
Empowerment Is the Key

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FOCUS ON FRESHMEN:

How to Survive the Transition without Alcohol Problems

HEALTH EDUCATORS HAVE LONG RECOGNIZED THAT THE FIRST YEAR OF COLLEGE IS A CRITICAL POINT as young people develop lifestyles and habits that they carry into adulthood. Now Orange County campuses are customizing approaches to freshman orientation to help students minimize the risk for problems with alcohol and other drugs.

"I look at this problem as a societal issue that extends beyond the university," said Dani Smith, director of peer and health education at Chapman University. "There really is no single silver bullet with so many kinds of students."

Smith writes and directs a dramatic role-playing exercise called SOAPS that is presented to new students during a four-day orientation. The brief skits are filled with material on alcohol and other drug issues, followed by group discussion. The skits also include general health information,

such as tips to avoid the "Freshman 15"—the 15 pounds students commonly gain eating cafeteria fare. Two hundred to four hundred students go through orientation each year.

At California State University – Fullerton, incoming freshmen participate in *Alcohol 101*, a CD ROM program produced by the Century Council, an alcohol-industry-funded education group, gives students information about what to expect physiologically with each standard drink consumed, according to weight and gender.

The campus health education office sponsors a number of awareness events throughout the year. A peer education program helps to plan and deliver these events, which range from *Sex-Tac-Toe*, a game on sexual responsibility, to *Safe Spring Break*, a campaign to minimize problems during the vacation period.

Getting new students to recognize the value of



campus health services is a common challenge to Orange County campuses. "I didn't use the health center until I was a junior," said Teresa Buechler, assistant health educator at California State University – Fullerton. "And I was a health science major." She noted that the health center is located in the back of the campus, so visible awareness activities help students realize what resources exist at the center.

The Irvine campus of the University of California has a health center that is also underutilized, and health educators there initiated a new program for freshmen called *Survival*.

"Our goal was to have students meet new people and learn about on-campus resources. Connected students are going to make healthier choices, be at less risk of alcohol problems, and ultimately be more successful," said Patricia Rantael, community health program manager at UCI. Rantael and her colleagues designed *Survival* with a goal of having at least 30 students complete the new program over the course of the fall quarter. "We mailed 4,000 fliers over the summer before they arrived on campus," said Rantael.

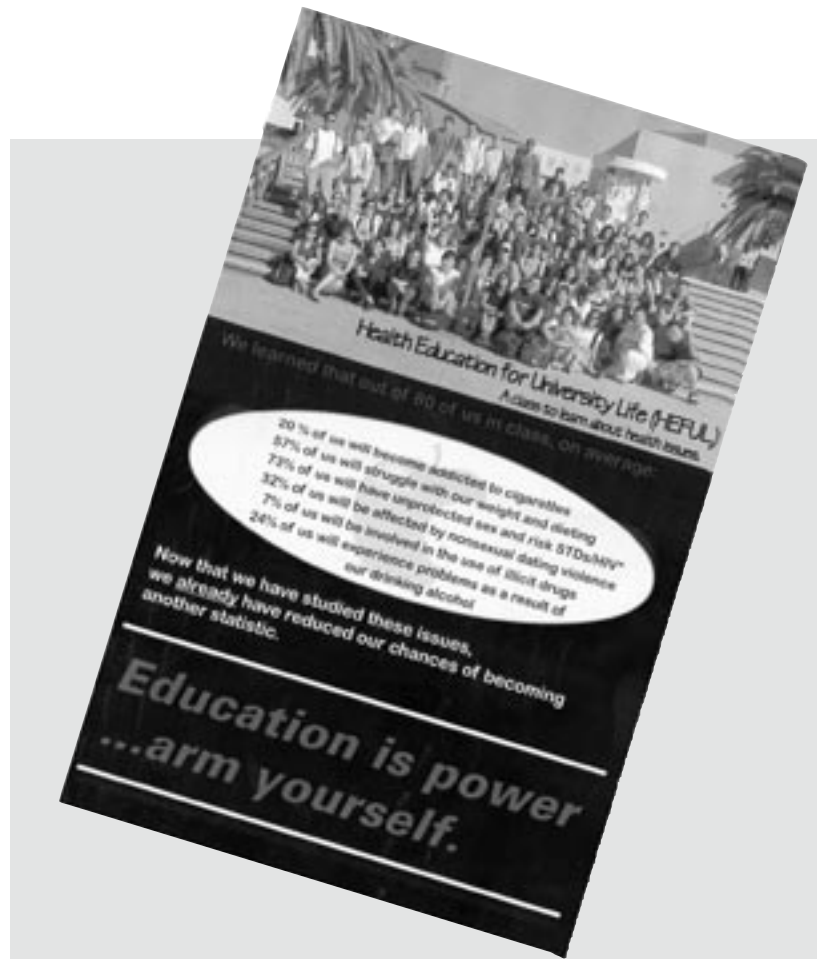
"We had four sessions between October and November 2000; each had a different theme. We ended up with 48 participants, and have decided to increase the number of sessions next year."

Rantael structured the sessions with incentives, including dinner, a T-shirt, and 1.3 academic units for those who completed all four sessions.

Thomas Parham, PhD, assistant vice chancellor, welcomed students to the first session last fall. Themes included campus information, academic success strategies, health, and celebration as the final session. "We used the *Alcohol 101* CD ROM during one of the sessions. We had a lot of extra CDs to give to participants. We also recruited students to participate in peer health education during the sessions," said Rantael.

The project's goals would seem to be fulfilled in this first-year pilot. In February ten students returned for a reunion meeting. "About one-third of the students we have heard from had gotten involved in some kind of student organization," reported Rantael. Areas of involvement included the student abroad program, student government, and MECHA, a group for Latino students.

"Another measure of success is that one student now volunteers in the health education department, and three others signed up to be peer health educators." After its near ten percent rate of volunteerism, plans are being made to expand the UCI program next year, according to Rantael.



IS THAT YOUR FACE ON THE POSTER?

"What can we do to get our messages out there?" wondered David Bishop, with the UCI Health Education Department. Bishop thought that standard-issue posters produced by state and federal agencies weren't catching students' attention and decided that they might be more likely to tune in if students saw friends and classmates in posters.

So, last year the department tried a new tactic. It started working with key student groups to develop posters and distribute the health message posters around campus.

"The weight of the group stands behind the message, and we believe this supports our social-norming campaign," said Bishop.

A Q&A

WITH CONNIE PECHMANN

■ Connie Pechmann, PhD, is an associate professor of marketing in the Graduate School of Management, University of California–Irvine.

Prevention File

interviewed her about using marketing techniques in public health promotion campaigns.

The tobacco industry has long used marketing expertise to expand their business and profits. Why do you think it took the tobacco-control movement so long to realize they needed marketing expertise too?

A. It isn't just the tobacco-control movement—the same can be said of many other public health movements. The “movers and shakers” in these movements are generally trained in public health, public administration, or community medicine. With no formal coursework in marketing, they often are unaware of the “science” of marketing or how much they can learn from marketing practitioners and researchers. Further, public health educators tend to rely on their own tried and true methods, such as community-based volunteerism and school-based prevention efforts.

Running a paid mass media advertising campaign is a very different ballgame that relies on sophisticated qualitative and quantitative techniques. At the same time, we marketing practitioners and professors tend to be focused on teaching and consulting and don't often get involved in public health counter-marketing efforts. Schools of public health and public administration should partner with business schools, or at least offer marketing courses to their students.

Your research notes that message content is one variable that adds to cost effectiveness. Where do tobacco-industry-sponsored anti-tobacco ads fit in terms of message content?

A. The messages in antismoking ads vary considerably. Some use the standard message that smoking will kill you, but more now use new messages on tobacco-industry manipulation, secondhand smoke, and others.

In marketing, these one-liners are called “single-minded selling propositions” and it is critical to choose a really good one. Companies spend very considerable sums of money doing this. I have found that the messages about hurting loved ones and social rejection seem to work best in tobacco work.



However, it is also very important to convey the message clearly and consistently and to use a suitable spokesperson. Tobacco-industry-sponsored antismoking ads have only recently arrived on the scene and I am just now initiating a study of them. However, some of the Philip Morris ads convey the message "don't smoke just because your friends are doing it—resist peer pressure." I am concerned about this message because it might imply that lots of kids smoke and that it is socially acceptable to do. Also, this message seems to suggest that it might be okay to smoke as long as it isn't on account of peer pressure.

You have suggested that message consistency is important to catch consumers' attention. How can a campaign be successful, yet not repetitious?

A. The main purpose of mass media advertising is to let people know what you stand for and then remind them of it, over and over. Message consistency means stating the same "single-minded proposition" in many different ways, using numerous different ads.

If you chose a weak "single-minded proposition," you will need to change it almost immediately. If you choose a really good one, you might be able to use it for months, years, or even decades. The longer you use it, the more lasting the impression. Some classic examples of well-chosen, long-lived message themes are Nike's *Just Do It* or *Listerine Kills Germs*.

Many habits—both good and bad—either start in college or are solidified in college. It is in college that many young adults in the United States live independently for the first time and start to make major lifestyle decisions.

Some tobacco-control programs now use youth-created campaigns; others use youths as spokespersons in adult-created campaigns. Have you noticed differences in effectiveness between these approaches?

A. When a campaign is aimed at youths, most marketers talk to youths periodically in focus groups to obtain their input. Florida's tobacco-control campaign is apparently trying to take this a step further by holding summits with very large numbers of youths, and even relying on youths to come up with specific message themes and ads. We don't have enough

data to know if this approach is more or less effective than the standard way of doing things.

Is there any independent research going on to examine the impact of tobacco-industry-sponsored antismoking ads?

A. In my newest study, I will be comparing the Philip Morris ads to the American Legacy ads and numerous state-sponsored ads. The California Tobacco-Related Disease Research Program has funded my research, along with a study that will focus specifically on industry-sponsored ads and their possible mixed messages.

The study results will be available in a year or two—sorry, it takes a while. I should note, however, that the Philip Morris ads were created by the highly reputable advertising agency Young & Rubicam. They seem interested in making it work and have been kind enough to share with me the results of their ad testing. Based on the reports that I have been given, each

ad has been correctly identified as "antismoking" by at least 95 percent of the youths that were surveyed.

It is hard to miss the fact that these are anti-smoking ads. In my view, and in the view of many marketers, the real test of an ad is whether it influences behavior or behavior intentions. I have recommended that Philip Morris test their ads using a more rigorous quantitative "copy-testing" approach.

They should ask an independent research firm to recruit at-risk kids, randomly assign half of them to see the ads, then ask all of them about their views of smoking and their intentions to smoke in the future. The kids who saw the ads should, at minimum, report a lower intention to smoke. This may sound like a hokey research method to you, but if done well, it can predict how an ad will affect product sales.

You and other researchers have focused on the middle school and high school population. Do you believe more research on ad appeal to college students is needed?

A. Yes, I think that more research is needed on college students. Many habits—both good and bad—either start in college or are solidified in college. It is in college that many young adults in the United States live independently for the first time and start to make major lifestyle decisions.

We need to know whether large numbers of individuals start smoking in college and, if so, who they are and why they start and what we can do about it. For instance, at UC Irvine, where I work, there is a concern that Asian-American females may be taking up smoking in large numbers, but we have no hard data on this.

Most past research on college students has used what I call a "yearbook" approach, for example, where every year a new group of freshmen is surveyed. In a certain year, if there is an increase in the percentage of freshman who smoke, we can detect it. What we need is more of what I call "photo album" research that follows young people as they grow older so that we can better understand what they do and why and what their "hot buttons" are.

MADD

National Youth
Summit Comes
Home to
Orange County

By Michael Le

FOUR ORANGE COUNTY STUDENTS were part of a 52-member team of young Californians who went to the nation's capital last fall as part of a national summit on underage drinking. The Summit, in part to celebrate MADD's 20th anniversary, resulted in an ambitious underage-drinking policy agenda.

MADD sponsored a similar National Youth Summit in 1997. The 2000 Summit included 435 young people, representing every U.S. congressional district and three territories.

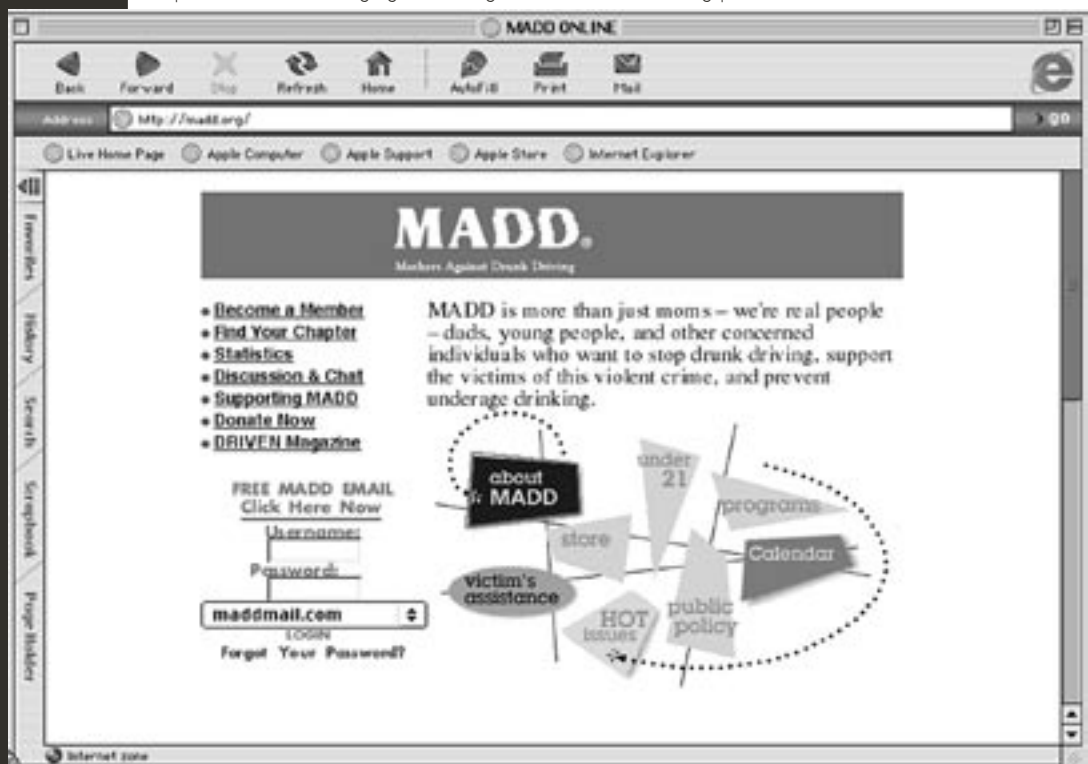
Besides me, participants from Orange County were: Mathew Frusher, 17, Whittier High School; Maria De Jesus Esquivel, 16, Buena Park High School; and Raheel Farook, 16, Western High School. This team effectively represented the 30th, 39th, 45th, and 46th Congressional Districts in Orange County.

The delegates focused on six important alcohol issues: alcohol availability, enforcement of laws, alcohol issues in high schools and colleges, underage drinking, impaired driving, and impact of media messaging. U.S. Surgeon

General David Satcher, MD, was a featured speaker, along with other key federal health leaders and media experts, such as Antonio Moro, ABC News, Rick Mater, senior vice president of Broadcast Standards for the WB Television Network, and Robert Morse, director of data and research for *U.S. News and World Report*.

Youths discussed the information and data to create 14 recommendations addressing underage drinking. The top four were presented at a news conference on the capitol steps. They are:

- Require states to use magnetic strips or bar codes on all identification and require licensed alcohol outlets to use scanners to verify customers' ages.
- Increase the excise tax on alcoholic beverages, and use the revenue to fund alcohol awareness and prevention programs.
- Fully fund and implement a national campaign to prevent underage drinking.
- Restrict alcohol ads before 10 p.m., and, in equal time to aired alcohol ads, require the alcohol industry to pay for counter-advertising during prime time.



After the news conference, delegates met with their elected members of Congress to discuss possible ways to implement the recommendations in their home states and communities.

While we were in Washington the House of Representatives had floor debates on legislation to set national standards for .08 BAC. This law requires that all states implement a .08 percent blood-alcohol content standard as the legal level for impaired driving by 2004. States that choose not to impose that standard will lose millions of dollars a year in federal highway funding. The legislation was passed by the time we got home. While this law has been in effect in California since January 1, 1990, 31 states do not have .08 laws.

Since its founding in 1980, MADD organizers estimate that the organization's efforts have saved more than 183,000 lives and established more than 2,300 anti-drinking driving and underage-drinking laws. In 1999, MADD changed its mission statement to include underage drinking issues.

While alcohol-related driving crashes and fatalities have been reduced by 40 percent since 1980, these preventable incidents are still the most frequently committed violent crime in the United States. In 1999 over 15,000 people were killed and another 600,000 injured in alcohol-related traffic crashes. According to MADD's Website (www.MADD.org), underage drinking in America is the number-one youth drug problem, killing 6.5 times more youths than all other illegal drugs combined.

Orange County's Representatives

Maria Esquivel went to the summit because she's concerned about underage drinking and wanted to gain leadership skills to use in her daily life.

"I knew I had made a difference when I met with Congressman Ed Royce and convinced

him that underage drinking is a priority," said Esquivel.

"I want to share what I've learned with others and to get organized locally around the MADD agenda. I really liked the first recommendation, because it seems as though it would put a stop to fake IDs," said Esquivel. "We all know that fake IDs are a real problem."

Raheel Farook agrees. "A focus on identification seems to be the most realistic, and is something that seems like it could begin to save lives immediately.

"I enjoyed learning about the danger of underage drinking and driving," said Farook. "I was excited about having my voice heard by the country." Farook met with Congresswoman Loretta Sanchez on Capitol Hill, which was a highlight of his trip.

Both Esquivel and Farook sit on the Friday Night Live Youth Advisory Council of Orange County and also work with the Tobacco Use Prevention Program's (TUPP) *Back That Ash Up* program. Both intend to use their Washington experience with these local groups to organize and support the MADD agenda.

I went to the Summit because I recognize that policy issues are key in prevention. I've been active in Huntington Beach with the HBCASA (Huntington Beach Coalition Against Substance Abuse), Friday Night Live Youth Advisory Council, TUPP, and other groups around the county, and have met with city council members about alcohol issues. To some degree I understand the "glass ceiling" of local work, where at times it must be supported by federal or state policy.

I was really excited by the fact that we played a critical role in Congress' decision to implement the .08 BAC law. I felt empowered and a spark for politics was ignited in me. I will never forget my visit to the House of Representatives. As I sat in a bulletproof seat, I made myself a promise: I will sit in this room again, but next time I will be a congressman.

We are laying out a plan to gather support in Orange County for the MADD recommendations. Some strategies include seeking endorsements from Orange County prevention groups, making district visits to area legislators, and discussing the agenda with our local law-enforcement groups. I think the ID-reader recommendation can build good alliances. It can be used for tobacco sales as well, which would decrease the number of teen smokers.

Officer Bruce Bradley, from the Huntington Beach Police Department, who served as a facilitator at the conference, will hold a smaller summit in Huntington Beach. Officer Bradley hopes to gather 50 to

100 young people. I will personally work with all these people and groups to organize this local summit.

Michael Le, 16, is a junior at Huntington Beach High School and represented the 45th Congressional District at the MADD Youth Summit.

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TUSTIN'S YOUTH ACTION TEAM:

Empowerment is the Key

MOVING AWAY FROM THE VIEW OF YOUTHS AS THE OBJECTS and recipients of adult-planned programs, the City of Tustin has created a culture in which young people are considered community resources. This collaborative process with teens is drawing national attention as a way to engage young people in meaningful ways.

"It wasn't easy. We started the way a lot of communities do, by starting youth activities that failed to draw youths," said Patrick Sanchez, director for Tustin's Parks and Recreation Services.

"We learned the hard way that the best way to develop youth services is for adults to back off and give young people the responsibility of developing and managing programs which are meaningful to them," said Sanchez. "Then the youth-driven programs take on a life of their own."

After no one showed up for an adult-initiated teen program, Jim Box, a supervisor with the Parks and Recreation Services, decided to turn over the program to the teens themselves and let them take charge. In April 1998, using a one-time \$5,000 grant from the Alcohol and Drug Education Prevention Team (ADEPT), Orange County Health Care Agency, the city recruited Tustin high school students for the Youth Action Team (YAT).

Newspaper ads and a poster campaign generated interest in the search. High school counselors encouraged students to apply. Sixty-two teens applied to be on the team. From interviews, 13 teens representing all high schools in Tustin were selected to be on the YAT board. The remaining applicants formed a committee of volunteers working in collaboration to plan fun events and community service projects.

"Teens know what they want and how to do it," said Box. "They have taken leadership and ownership for YAT projects."

The process of empowerment begins with intensive leadership training. "The sessions prepare members to assume leadership roles within the community, identify and communicate youth issues," said Box. "The group also develops alternative activities to provide a safe, fun, healthy, and supportive environment for youths."

"Our young people now have a voice in school and community affairs and want to be heard," said Box. "They have made presentations to the city council, parks and recreation commission, schools, and

community organizations. Community leaders depend on them to provide the teen perspective in organizing events."

The team is composed of diverse youths—both students with high grades and others who

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could be stereotyped as "at-risk." Everyone gains skills and competence in planning and managing teen community events. According to Rochell Ambersund, social worker with the county's social services agency and facilitator of the 2000 training, "the city program has shown that young people can be trained to be leaders. Membership on the YAT allows for a lot of interaction, enabling one member to serve as a mentor to the other."

The synergy created by teamwork has been responsible for the turnaround of Carlos Alvaros, a sophomore who used to fail all his school classes. Rising to the challenge of doing something meaningful as a YAT member, Alvaros recounts: "I've had the chance to tell people what I think teens in our city need. I've planned big events like dances, forums, and trips. Our team volunteers at community events. All these things might not be a big deal to you, but I know when I tell people that I'm on the Youth Action Team, they look up to me."

Researchers on positive youth development, notably Peter Benson of The Search Institute, have shifted the prevention paradigm from

repairing reducing deficits to building assets. Benson identified 40 developmental assets which, when present, predict healthy outcomes for all youths regardless of key social demographics such as gender, family income, race-ethnicity, town size, or region.

The Benson research is published in *Getting Results*, a California Department of Education manual on prevention. It shows an inverse relationship between assets such as community service, recreational activities, and connectedness with family, school and community, and risky behavior.

According to Benson, when youths are given opportunities to develop community service projects and to contribute to the improvement of existing youth services, they acquire social competence, a sense of self, and a sense of meaning and purpose. This resiliency protects them from the negative impacts of alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use.

YAT members develop community service projects and recruit and maintain youth volunteers from schools and community to serve on

working committees. YAT has organized forums on timely topics such as zero tolerance and club drugs.

Tustin High School senior Danny Nou headed up the Bike Rodeo in collaboration with the

Tustin City Police Department last April. Five hundred young people who could not afford to pay for protective gear received helmets. Over 400 bikes were registered for free by the police, who waived the usual registration fee.

"I enjoy helping others and helping the city," said Nou. "Though I did not get any monetary reward for organizing the event, for me it was more than enough to see a smile on a young person's face as he tried on a new helmet. We organized the rodeo to protect our bikers from harm and to keep our streets safe."

Nou has a piece of advice to youths who want to make a difference in their school and in their community: "Put your words into action. Just don't talk about things you want to change, just do it."

The members meet twice a month at the Senior Center, thus bridging the generation gap in joint projects with the seniors. In consultation with the seniors, they developed a design for the beautification project called *Project Flower Power* and jointly completed the landscape project.

The U.S. Navy Youth Program recently came to Tustin for a first-hand look. "This paradigm shift is worth replicating in other cities where we have a presence," said Mark Richards, program manager. "We're impressed."

Our young people now have a voice in school and community affairs and want to be heard.



Jim Box (l) hangs out with members of the Young Action Team of Tustin city at a local park.