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The Ventura County edition of *Prevention File* is published in cooperation with the Ventura County Behavioral Health Department, Alcohol and Drug Programs, Prevention, Intervention, and Training Division. Please address all comments to Kathy Staples, Prevention, Intervention, and Training Division, 300 N. Hillmont, Ventura, CA 93003 or call 805/652-3341. E-mail: Kathleen.Staples@mail.co.ventura.ca.us

SANTA PAULA TEENAGER MAYRA AGUINIGA HAS A LITTLE SISTER AND TWO YOUNG COUSINS she would like to see grow up to be "someone important." She worries, though, that they won't make it because of some of the influences around them—primarily the bars and other alcohol outlets they must pass every day on their way to and from school.

Therefore, when her school's Friday Night Live group offered the opportunity to express concerns

pelled to perform assessments around their city's junior high and four elementary schools, where they felt younger students were being influenced. There are a number of alcohol outlets in close proximity to all of those schools.

Each group started with a training session, at which they received a blow-up map of their focus area. They added pins to show the locations of schools and alcohol outlets. They also met with local police to let them know what they were working on.

GOING THE EXTRA MILE IN SANTA PAULA

about those outlets to the Santa Paula City Council, Aguiniga jumped at the chance. She and 14 other members of Santa Paula High School's FNL group worked through the early months of this year gathering data and presented their "one-mile-radius assessment" to city leaders in May.

"I would like to see my sister and my little cousins succeed in life, but around every school, there is alcohol," said Aguiniga, 15.

The Santa Paula group was one of two Ventura

County FNL groups participating in the project. The other group consisted of four students from Buena High School in Ventura.

The original idea was to do a one-mile-radius assessment around each high school, and the Buena High School students chose to follow that plan. However, the Santa Paula students felt com-

They then visited all of the outlets, taking pictures inside and out when management allowed, and taking notes on whether the outlets were in compliance with regulations concerning sales and advertising.

Later, the students interviewed key people in their cities, including police officials, school officials, parents and local merchants concerning their views on alcohol sales and policies, and on underage drinking.

All of the work was done in coordination with the FNL groups' "Cinco de Mayo With Pride" project, an effort to take the focus off of alcohol and put it back on national pride on the May 5 Mexican holiday. As the students went about their data collection, they handed out brochures about the history of *Cinco de Mayo*.

Annette Preciado, FNL coordinator at Buena High School, said the assessment project had served as an excellent avenue to get youths involved in environmental prevention that led to youth-based policy recommendations.

She also noted that she was proud of the work the students had done. "They are trying to change





norms. They are doing the groundwork, and they are educating the community."

Jessica Avila, who coordinates the Santa Paula FNL group for Big Brothers and Big Sisters and Santa Paula High School, said she was amazed by her students' enthusiasm.

"The trainer gave them the opportunity to focus on one school, and they said, 'No, that's not enough,'" she said. "They were worried for the younger children at all of the schools."

The four Buena High School students visited all nine outlets within a one-mile radius of their school. They were surprised to find not only offensive *Cinco de Mayo* advertising, but also advertising aimed specifically at their age group.

"There is one ad with the St. Pauli Girl wearing what looks like a cheerleading skirt, and I don't think that's really for adults," said Jenny Martinez, 15, a member of the Buena group. "The ads also talk about how much fun drinking is, and kids our age want to have fun."

Martinez said the outlets were also "covered" with ads—far more than is regulated by law. She said she felt her group's work was important because, "People need to realize what is really

By law, it should cover only 20 percent. They also found alcohol signage posted at the eye level of young children.

They found some stores selling alcohol in the same areas that they sold candy. And, they found outlets that promoted *Cinco de Mayo* as a drinking holiday.

The students returned to all of the problem stores and presented managers with brochures outlining proper alcohol advertising and sales procedures and explaining that some alcohol advertising, such as that for *Cinco de Mayo*, is an affront to cultural groups. Avila said not all of the stores were immediately receptive, but that at least two agreed to reduce their signage.

Aguiniga said she was dismayed to find some advertising she felt was specifically aimed at children. "They should not be advertising to young kids, but only to adults," she said.

Besides presenting their assessment to city officials, the Santa Paula group held a rally at their school in early May, focusing on *Cinco de Mayo*'s cultural significance and decrying the alcohol industry for making it into a drinking holiday. In addition, they visited after-school programs at elementary schools and spoke to the children about the real meaning of *Cinco de Mayo*.

Avila said group participants gained confidence from their activities. "They realized that they are able to make a difference in the community," she said. "These are kids who might not have felt that way before."

Aguiniga said she felt empowered by her role of educating and making changes in her community. "We can help," she said. "Some of my older cousins have gotten involved with drugs and alcohol. I want things to be different for my younger cousins and my little sister." □

For additional information about the Mile-Radius Assessment in Ventura, contact Annette Preciado at 805/388-4434. In Santa Paula contact Jessica Avila at 805/644-6792, ext 108.

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going on. We are able to educate them."

The Santa Paula group was broken into three teams: a mapping team, a survey team and an interview team.

As they went about their work, the Santa Paula group quickly found that they could not only complete the tasks for this project, but could intervene on problem areas along the way. For instance, at several stores, they found that alcohol signage covered about 95 percent of all advertising space.

Have You Got It?

THE POWER TO BE . . .

IN THE EARLY 1990S, FINDINGS FROM NATIONAL SURVEYS started sounding an alarm about alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug use among teenage girls. Studies also documented rising rates of risky behaviors related to that use, such as early sexual activity or unprotected sex. At the same time, the 1995 landmark report, *Great Transitions*, from the Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development, said that the years between the ages of 10 and 14 provide an important window of opportunity to deliver prevention messages and provide support for young people.

The report said: "Adolescence is the last phase of the life span in which social institutions have reasonable ready access to the entire population, so the potential for constructive influence and improving adolescents' life choices is great. Early adolescence—the phase during which young people are just beginning to engage in risky behaviors, but before damaging patterns have become established—offers an excellent opportunity for interventions to prevent later casualties and promote successful adult lives."

Spurred by this—and other information—the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services launched a national campaign in 1996 called Girl Power! to help girls navigate through a complex world full of risks. In 1999 the city of Oxnard organized its first Young Women's Symposium to encourage young girls to make the most of their lives.

According to the Young Women's Symposium project coordinator Avie Guerra, the program is modeled after Girl Power! and uses materials from that campaign.

"The theme of the symposium is "The Power to Be . . ." We use Girl Power! posters, bookmarkers, stickers and other Girl Power! materials that we get from the federal government. We ask the girls to be honest with us and fill out a questionnaire, which is of course anonymous. So far, the girls' feedback from the symposium has been very positive," Guerra says.

Since the first symposium in 1999, more than 800 girls from the Oxnard, Rio, and Hueneme school districts have participated in the annual event.

Although the symposium is a prototype of Girl Power!, the concept originated from the community. The idea for the symposium came out of a weekly meeting held for nonprofit organizations in Ventura County.

"The Young Women's Symposium is literally the result of a brainstorming session during a

"Weed and Seed" community meeting. At that one particular meeting, we talked about the needs in the community and how they could be addressed. Originally, we wanted to host some type of conference for young girls. The main reason behind the symposium was that we had noticed a rise in criminal activity among young girls in Oxnard," Guerra explained.

The "Weed & Seed" program is a U.S.

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GOALS OF THE GIRL POWER! CAMPAIGN

When the Girl Power! campaign was launched in 1996, then HHS Secretary Donna E. Shalala said: "Too many girls are taking dangerous chances with the only lives they will ever have. We hope to reach girls at this key transitional age when they are forming their values and attitudes. Our job as caring adults is to help girls build confidence and pursue opportunities."

The initial goal of Girl Power! was to help delay the onset and reduce the use of alcohol, tobacco, and illicit drugs among 9- to 14-year-old girls. However, research on adolescent development made it clear that a more comprehensive approach was needed to address related issues, risks and concerns for girls in this age range. Topics such as nutrition, physical activity, eating disorders, mental health issues, and premature sexual activity demanded attention as well. Therefore, Girl Power! expanded to include the following three primary objectives:

1. To increase public awareness among 9- to 14-year-old girls and their caregivers about the following:
 - Risks and consequences associated with alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug use.
 - Health issues associated with poor nutrition, including calcium deficiencies and eating disorders.
 - Health issues associated with lack of physical activity.
 - Risks and consequences associated with early sexual activity, including pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases.
 - Mental health problems, including depression and suicide.
2. To increase knowledge among girls and their caregivers about how girls can develop positive interpersonal and social skills, and to provide resources and materials for girls to achieve these skills.
3. To demonstrate the benefits to girls and their caregivers of developing competencies and increasing self-efficacy (such as developing interests and abilities in their education, the arts, sports, and other activities).



Department of Justice community-

based initiative that is a comprehensive multi-agency approach to law enforcement, crime prevention, and community revitalization for the city of Oxnard.

"We had arrested a very young girl who had a tattoo on her chest that read, "Trust no man." That arrest was heart breaking. At that point, I mentioned the incident in the "Weed & Seed" meeting, and that is pretty much how the Young Women's Symposium was born," said Officer Gino Rodriguez, from the Oxnard Police Department Colonia Storefront.

The Young Women's Symposium's primary purpose is early alcohol and drug intervention and education of 7th and 8th grade girls in the Oxnard area.

"It is between 6th and 8th grade when we start to lose the girls. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance that we start intervention early. And if we can help at least one girl in the symposium, then all of our work is worth it," says Officer Sharon Giles of the Oxnard Police Department.

"We consider the symposium a success. The symposium lasts about six hours. We have the girls break

up into different groups. And we definitely separate them from their friends," Guerra says.

The symposium consists of several workshops during which participants discuss various topics, such as alcohol and drug education, alcohol and drug prevention, anger management, conflict resolution, teen pregnancy, repercussions of pregnancy, dating older men, health issues, family relations, self-esteem and information about Girl Power! Counselors are available on site to speak to the young persons on a one-on-one basis, if needed. The girls also learn about the numerous resources that are available to them in the community.

"Some of our best role models in the community are present at the event. We start the symposium by having the girls play a ball game called "ice breakers." Then we get rolling, so to speak," Guerra laughs. "We ask the girls to wear T-shirts with the slogan "The Power to Be . . ." We also provide lunch for the girls. They have a lot of fun, but they also learn that they have immediate goals. We also tell the girls to talk to their parents. We teach them that their parents are not their enemies," Guerra says.

Gustavo Castro, a volunteer for the symposium, not only agrees that the girls should not view their parents as enemies, but he also wishes that the parents would become more involved in their children's lives.

"There is an incredible amount of peer pressure on kids in general nowadays. It is important for parents to set proper boundaries. The parents need to check to see where the kids are at all times. If the kids are going to a party, the parents need to find out if alcohol is going to be served at that party," Castro says.

The symposium participants are encouraged to think about their own choices. In addition to learning about making choices, the consequences of alcohol consumption are discussed with the youths.

"Sexual assault, date rape, fighting and automobile crashes are just some of the results of drinking which we go over with the girls. We also educate them on the effects of drug and alcohol use. We show them pictures of what alcohol and drugs do to your body. We have seen a lot of kids lately who are addicted to pills because they want to lose weight," Castro says.

The Young Women's Symposium involves a wide segment of the community, ranging from parents, volunteers, schools, and health care professionals, to law enforcement.

The agencies that help to sponsor the conference include the Oxnard Police Department, Oxnard Police Department Colonia Storefront, Weed & Seed I & II, Ventura County District Attorney's Office, Ventura County Probation Agency, Colonia Coalition for Community Development, *El Concilio*, The Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence, Interface, Oxnard, Rio and Hueneme school districts, Casa San Juan/Merced, Mercy Housing, *El Centrito*, city of Oxnard Housing, Food Share and the Ventura County Human Services Agency.

Since its 1996 launch, the Girl Power! campaign has teamed with nearly 5,000 community-based programs and organizations, 300 local endorsers and more than 60 national endorsers, including the American Association of University Women (AAUW), American Medical Association (AMA), and the Girl Scouts of the U.S.A., to promote the Girl Power! message nationwide.

The next Young Women's Symposium will take place on Oct. 12 at Pacifica High School in Oxnard. For information about the Symposium, contact Avie Guerra at 805/486-9777. For information on Girl Power! visit PrevLine, the Website of the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at www.health.org. □

Q&A with KATHY STAPLES



Kathy Staples is the division manager for the Ventura County Behavioral Health, Alcohol and Drug Programs, Prevention, Intervention and Training Division. She has worked in the county's alcohol and drug program for 18 years, and has been in the prevention field for 26 years. Staples has been an instructor at Oxnard College's Addictive Disorders Program since 1988, and currently teaches an alcohol and other drug prevention course that is a pilot for other programs in colleges and universities across the state.

When people hear the phrase "alcohol and drug prevention," a lot of things might come to mind. How would you describe what you do?

A: Alcohol and drug prevention used to be synonymous with education. DARE and "Just Say No" are a couple of such programs that have high name recognition. But today's prevention work is much more complex. Why? There was low evidence for the effectiveness of the educational programs. We have learned that we need to deal not only with the host—the person—but also with the agent—the alcohol and other drugs—and with the environment. Many factors contribute to alcohol and other drug problems. We don't just deal with individuals. It is important to deal with the entire physical and social context in which people use. We take a multi-level, systemic approach. One of the strategies and ways of addressing prevention issues is with an environmental approach. With this approach, we promote an environment that is conducive to low-risk drinking or abstinence; reduce

factors in the social and cultural environment that encourage heavy drinking in the general public and any drinking in high-risk groups; and promote changes in the physical environment when high-risk drinking does take place. We address rules and regulations and we address environmental factors, that is, the physical and social context in which drinking and other drug use occurs.

Are you saying educating people about alcohol and other drugs doesn't work?

A: No, it's not that education doesn't work. Rather, it has limited effects if used alone. Often in our culture we operate under the false assumption that information alone changes behavior. If that were true, we would all eat low-fat diets, exercise at least three times a week, not smoke and wear our seatbelts. What's needed is really a matrix of services that change a lot of factors that influence alcohol and other drug use. Education is just one strategy. When prevention forces are working together, in the same complex multi-systemic way that the real world's influences on us work, that's when you really get results.

Prevention work has gotten more sophisticated. We really recognize that there is no magic bullet. We can't just tell people about the negative effects that alcohol can have on their lives and think that's going to prevent problems. We live in a culture that promotes alcohol and other drug use. We need a wide range of strategies to counter those cultural norms.

What are some of the environmental factors you address?

A: Some are related to the serving and promotional practices at bars and restaurants, such as overserving patrons to the point of intoxication; happy hours with drink specials that encourage hazardous drinking, drinking games as promotions

in bars; teen night activities that bring underage customers into a drinking establishment; and servers and sellers who are untrained in responsible sales or service practices. Even the location and total number of alcohol outlets is a factor. Research has found that a high density of alcohol outlets leads to higher rates of certain problems, including alcohol- and drug-related violent crime.

Others factors are related to how alcohol is promoted and advertised. Those factors include billboards that pair alcohol with high-risk activities, such as car racing or skiing; alcohol advertising that targets specific groups, such as ethnic groups and youths; and alcohol industry sponsorship of

community events, such as *Cinco de Mayo*, Saint Patrick's Day and gay pride festivals. In addition, many holidays or cultural symbols are used to promote drinking or place drinking at the center of celebrations. For example, Halloween, once primarily a children's celebration, is now the third-largest drinking holiday in the United States. So, in a lot of ways, we're dealing with the major factors that shape the problems we experience, in addition to the problems themselves.

Even our use of language contributes to the way society thinks about drinking. For example, the

widespread use of the word "accident" to describe an alcohol-related crash fails to adequately assign responsibility to the drinking driver.

In what way is your prevention work in Ventura County different from what's happening in other counties?

A: Actually there is exciting prevention work happening all over the state. I am a member of the Southern California Prevention Exchange, which is a group comprised of ten Southern California counties, Baja Mexico and the Institute for Public

Prevention work has gotten more sophisticated. We really recognize that there is no magic bullet.

Strategies. We are all moving to more outcome, research-based prevention. The focus of our work together is to plan and implement cross-county collaborative with an environmental/public policy focus that addresses the group's current top agendas—underage access and DUI prevention. Ventura County ADP is highly vested in the process. For example, Ventura is the site for a National Highway and Traffic Safety Administration-funded project to address problematic bars and restaurants that have practices that put the community at risk (see page 7).

I used to have a staff of about 14 people, many of them assigned to different communities. Essentially I would tell them, "Bless you, my child—go and prevent drug and alcohol problems in this community," and they'd often come back with bloody knuckles because communities were reluctant to have a county employee point out to them what the problems were in their communities.

In 1996, the then director of the county program said, "I know treatment works, but I don't know that prevention does." We had 32 different programs at that time. He told me to narrow the focus and to write a strategic plan that was based on research and outcomes. As I did research, I realized that environmental prevention was a critical and missing piece. We were spending 99.9 percent of our energy dealing with the host (individuals) and ignoring the agent and the environment. Research showed that it is imperative to address the physical and social context in which alcohol and drug problems occur. It became clear through research, my contact with other experts in the field and our own work that no matter how good programs are in the smaller context, their message and impact are undermined unless community norms and policies also help to create an environment with a low level of alcohol and other drug problems. Fortunately others were in agreement, as the Board of Supervisors, the director of the Health Care Agency and others signed on in support.

We needed to take a look at all of the places where alcohol and other drugs were used. It could be a poorly lit park where drugs were being sold or an oversaturation of alcohol outlets in one area. It could be public events sponsored by the alcohol industry or schools and municipalities that didn't have clear alcohol or drug policies.

We needed to go to the people who had "insiders' eyes"—the people who lived in the communities. That year, Ventura County began funding grassroots neighborhood groups. Communities came forward and said they wanted to address issues that were causing problems in their communities. We provided a start-up grant for 11 groups

to do some planning. We provided intensive training and technical assistance, and they wrote implementation plans. We funded seven of those implementation projects. That may be one thing we do differently in Ventura County . . . many other counties primarily fund projects at an agency level. In many instances, we moved to a deeper level in the community with our funding.

What kind of results are you seeing?

A: Here are examples from three coalitions that we've funded for the past five years.

The Colonia neighborhood in Oxnard at one time was home to more alcohol outlets than any other section of the city. But that has changed. The Colonia Coalition (see *Prevention File*, Vol. 16, No.1, Winter 2002) worked with the merchants to reduce problems, and with the police and the regional Alcohol Beverage Control office to close down outlets where problems were ongoing, resulting in a significant decrease in crime. The Coalition also got a couple of streets rezoned, so that when alcohol outlets close, no new outlets can be built or opened. It identified a handball court where drug activity resulted in a huge number of calls for police services. The community wanted it torn down, but the city was reluctant. They went ahead and tore it down, with the result that police calls to the park went from over a hundred calls a month to only three in a four-month period—and those calls had nothing to do with alcohol or other drugs.

The LesBiGay Coalition (see *Prevention File*, Vol. 16, No.2, Spring 2001) has worked with gay bars to improve their responsible beverage sales and service and to make them safer and healthier environments. In addition, gay pride festivals, where alcohol was traditionally a big factor, are now very community and family-friendly events with an eye toward health and safety. The LesBiGay Coalition also worked with other LGBT-focused nonprofit agencies to address alcohol-related fund raising and the promotion of alcohol at their events. In addition, it has a hundred young people attending support groups. Many of those youths have been trained in environmental prevention and have set out with a fiery zeal to address the factors in their community that contribute to individual and community alcohol and other drug problems.

The Community Action Network (see *Prevention*

File, Vol. 16, No.1. Winter 2001) in Newbury Park started out as a coalition almost exclusively comprised of parents. It worked closely with local high schools to engage parents, school, students and community members to work together on prevention efforts. It developed policies for stadiums, sport teams and school club policies and recruited 3,600 parents to sign a published parent pledge directory. As a result of changing and enforcing home policies, it has established an effective process to address out-of-control home parties, galvanizing an entire community into action. And this was always a community that county-employed preventionists returned from with bloody knuckles.

Here's how it works. The county gives a small grant to a community, which mobilizes local residents to get trained, start looking at issues, develop a strategic plan, and then address those issues. As a result of funding these communities, we have a lot of neighborhood coalition-municipality-law enforcement partnerships. Put those three groups together, and, wow, there can be community involvement, ordinances, effective enforcement and public input. These are some very powerful partnerships.

What are your hopes for the future?

A: Funding is always an issue. We spend about 57 percent of our prevention budget on these contracts. I would like to spend more.

I would like to find and fund more neighborhood groups and community-based organizations that are interested in addressing the factors in their environments that contribute to alcohol and drug problems. Much of our county has not had the opportunity to benefit from the remarkable changes brought about by this community-based, community driven, and community-directed strategy.

This work is unique because it is reliant upon the community to discover and address its alcohol and other drug-related community problems. We don't develop the "master plan", rather we find the interested community members, we provide training and technical assistance, we encourage, we support, we nurture and then we sit back in wonderment at all they discover, address and change in their communities. One of our coalitions has as its credo, "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has." I love being a part of this process.

For information on how your community can get involved with prevention efforts to reduce alcohol and other drug problems, call Kathy Staples, at 805/ 652-3345 or e-mail Kathleen.Staples@mail.co.ventura.ca.us

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has.

WHERE DID YOU HAVE YOUR LAST DRINK?



IF YOU ARE CONVICTED OF DRIVING UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF ALCOHOL IN VENTURA COUNTY,

you will be asked where you had your least drink and other questions when you complete the Place of Last Drink Survey. But why is this information important?

The circumstances surrounding the drinking event that ended with an alcohol-impaired person getting behind the wheel of a car may be amenable to interventions to reduce risks. That's especially true, according to a number of studies, when it comes to licensed establishments, such as bars, taverns and restaurants. And in Ventura County, such premises represented over 55 percent of the places of last drink for 490 people attending convicted drinking-driver programs, according to a recent Ventura County Place of Last Drink Survey report.

Enforcement officials and prevention advocates have long known that tracking the pre-arrest activities of drinking drivers would help identify establishments that are lax in observing the law against serving alcohol to intoxicated persons. This state of affairs lies behind the survey, which is part of a new program funded by a 24-month grant from the federal government's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The Ventura office of the Institute for Public Strategies, which administers the program,

collects information from driving-under-the-influence offenders and uses it in an effort to reduce incidents of alcohol-impaired driving.

Under California state law all DUI offenders are required to attend drinking-driver programs. Since February 2002, staff members at the four Ventura County schools have been asking participants to complete the POLD survey. Among other things, participants name the location—bar or club, restaurant, private residence, vehicle, park or beach—where they had their last drink prior to their arrests.

Participants are also asked to provide the name of the establishments where they were served their last drinks. If a bar, club or restaurant is named repeatedly, that's an indication that there may be a problem in the way alcohol is served at the outlet.

Evaluators who have been trained by IPS staff to do a risk assessment enter the establishment as customers and spend at least two hours observing the serving practices of employees. Are the IDs of youthful customers being checked? Are any efforts being made to keep customers from drinking at a rate that will make them intoxicated? Is any effort made to keep obviously intoxicated patrons from leaving with the intent to drive?

They also note actions that although legal may contribute to an environment that increases the possibility of impaired patrons getting behind the wheel of their vehicles. For example, evaluators note if the establishment promotes food, or whether it has

drink specials that encourage high-risk drinking. Do servers offer alternative beverages to intoxicated persons? Do managers make transportation arrangements for intoxicated persons?

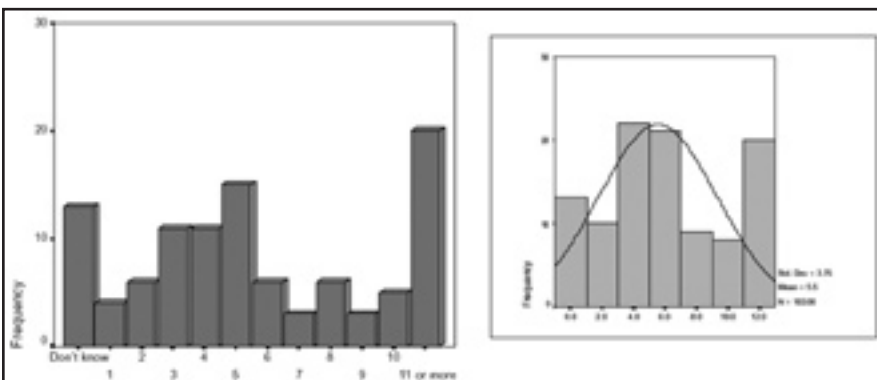
The evaluators document their findings in a formal report that often includes photographs. IPS staff also examines adjacent land uses, such as empty lots, commercial areas and other licensed premises. Other factors taken into consideration are a history of calls for police service or violations of state and local laws and ordinances. A site visit yields information about lighting and hours of operation. To date, IPS has assessed two outlets that have had multiple mentions as a place of last drink in the questionnaires.

"The role of bars in creating drunk driving is explained by the fact that people drive to and from them in order to drink, and they drink relatively heavily once they arrive," said researcher H. Laurence Ross, PhD, in *Confronting Drunk Driving: Social Policy for Saving Lives* (Yale University Press, 1992).

According to Ross, certain types of establishments have a culture that both encourages heavy consumption and "discourages being concerned with drunk driving and intervention to prevent it." It is these types of establishments that are most likely to be named as places of last drink by alcohol-impaired drivers and thus warrant attention to alter that culture.

Once they have collected information about an outlet, IPS staff members are in a position to work with owners and managers to change the practices that contributed to its identification as a place of last drink. The owner or manager is given the results of the assessment, with an offer of help from IPS in creating better management policies. The point is made that if the establishment avails itself of such help, including free responsible beverage service training for bartenders and other employees, there is less chance it will be cited by enforcement agents for violations that could jeopardize its

How many alcoholic beverages did you consume that day?





alcohol license. Three months later, IPS evaluators will do another assessment to note whether any of its recommendations for better serving policies have been implemented. If not, the owner or manager will be contacted again, and if there is still no cooperation, the information is turned over to enforcement agencies. So far IPS has worked with one business and has identified nine other establishments that are in the process of being assessed.

"We want several months of data before we talk to an outlet," says Dan Hicks, senior preventionist at IPS. "We just started data collection in February. We want to have a strong case before we approach a business."

The Ventura County project is modeled after a similar program that has been operating in San Diego for the past three years. Marian Novak, project director of the San Diego Responsible Hospitality Coalition, is a senior consultant with the Ventura County project. However, she notes that the Ventura County project is tailored specifically for that county's needs and population.

"What we're really proud of is that we've been able to develop this program without antagonizing bar and restaurant people in San Diego," says Novak. "We expect the success in Ventura County."

Based on the Responsible Hospitality Coalition's model, IPS has defined a process for working with identified establishments. First, it informs the owner or manager that the premises has been named repeatedly as a place of last drink. IPS then it offers to help with sales and service issues.

"We put together a package of things to do that will both keep their business profitable without putting people at risk," says Hicks. "We help them craft an improvement plan that meets their specific needs. We want them to welcome changes that protect their patrons and the community from injury, as well as their business from any potential liability."

Specific recommendations are based on the findings of the evaluators. Some establishments may decide to change their advertising and promotional practices. Others might start offering patrons non-alcoholic beverages or initiate a designated-driver program. Similar to San Diego's program, IPS may recommend responsible beverage service training for employees, which it will provide. This training teaches employees how to check identification, how to tell if a person is intoxicated and tactfully stop serving him or her, and how to take responsibility for preventing people from driving under the influence of alcohol.

Vicky Gonzales is the NHTSA project coordinator at IPS. She is in the process of developing a comprehensive responsible beverage service training program for on-sale establishments that brings together elements of personal safety, business security and compliance with local and state laws.

"We will have a cadre of different trainers," she says, adding that training in Spanish is part of the plan. "We hope to have it up and running in the next few months."

Hicks emphasizes that IPS wants to work constructively with the establishments and promote business vitality.

"We want to offer them the carrot, show them how to be profitable without violating the law or endangering the health and safety of their patrons and community members," he says. "That is the incentive. They don't want to be on the top ten list [for place of last drink]. And they don't want a lot of attention focused on how they contribute to community problems."

Novak says that in San Diego County, many of the bar and restaurant owners she contacted did not realize that their practices were contributing to alcohol-impaired driving.

"People who run a bar want to do a good job," she says. "Often they don't see the problems until we tell them."

If the establishments refuse to co-operate with IPS, the organization will, as Hicks says, "go to the next level" and make information available to law enforcement. Hicks calls the process "progressive discipline." The whole idea is to make straightforward changes at problem businesses in order to reduce the risk of DUI. But closing down businesses is also a possibility if the management fails to act to reduce risks. In fact, in San Diego County, the local Alcohol Beverage Control office has closed down five on-sale outlets based on information from the last-drink program.

IPS will share information from the Place of Last Drink Survey with other stakeholders to improve prevention efforts beyond problematic outlets. The

counselors at the drinking-driver schools who administer the survey will make use of the wealth of information collected on drinking-and-driving events, as will community coalitions that want to take action on alcohol-related problems.

Patrick Zarate, senior program administrator for drinking-driver programs of Ventura County, is particularly interested in the information that describes the drinking episodes that lead up to the arrests. He says that information about the type of alcohol consumed (beer, wine, distilled spirits or a combination), the amount of alcohol consumed, the number of miles driven before the arrest, and the duration (number of hours) of the drinking episode can be used in teaching DUI offenders.

"We hear a lot of students saying 'I only had a couple drinks' or 'it's not fair,'" says Zarate, "but we have found that the norm is that they are drinking heavily and then driving some distance. It's too new to do anything with yet, but if the trend persists, we will see that a large percentage of the drinking-driver program participants engage in risky alcohol behavior."

Zarate plans to use the information to break down the denial of his students.

"They can deny national statistics, but not these because they are local," he adds.

For treatment providers such as Zarate, prevention is important. He considers the Place of Last Drink Survey to be the "perfect marriage between prevention activity and treatment activity," and notes that some of the DUI offenders have responded positively to participating in the survey because they see it as contributing to the prevention of future DUI incidents.

"Anytime you have substance abuse, one of the responsibilities of treatment providers should be to do as much as they can working on the supply side," says Zarate. "Problem outlets should be rehabilitated."

Gonzales agrees.

"If we can do something to prevent problem environments in on-sale establishments in a manner that is business friendly and mindful of the community, we might be able to reduce the risk of DUI," she says. "And that makes everyone a winner."

For additional information of the Place of Last Drink project, call Vicki Gonzales at 805/477-0301.