

- 1 Holding Social Hosts Accountable
- 3 Managing Retail Alcohol Availability in Ventura
- 5 Tracing Back to the Source
- 7 Q&A with Chief Deputy Geoff Dean

The Ventura County edition of *Prevention File* is published in cooperation with the Ventura County Behavioral Health Department, Training, Applied Research and Alcohol and Drug Prevention Division. Please address all comments to Kathy Staples, manager of the Training, Applied Research and Alcohol and Drug Prevention Division, 300 N. Hillmont Ave., Ventura, CA 93003 or call 805/652-6096. E-mail: Kathleen.Staples@ventura.org

HOLDING SOCIAL HOSTS ACCOUNTABLE

RESEARCH STUDIES HAVE SHOWN that underage drinking parties represent an unusually high risk setting for youth alcohol problems, including alcohol-related traffic crashes, other forms of injury, sexual assaults, and other violence. Numerous press reports in the last couple of years have highlighted incidents involving underage parties where injuries have occurred, and where hosts—including parents—have been arrested, and where state and local social host liability legislation has been subsequently introduced and/or enacted.

The Ventura County Behavioral Health Department (VCBH) has studied a variety of data sources in recent years, including a telephone survey of county residents, local findings of the California Healthy Kids Survey, responses to the Place of Last Drink (POLD) survey administered by the Drinking Driver Programs, and various reports from community coalitions, because of concern that home parties often feature heavy drinking, and can pose serious safety risks to drinkers, non-drinkers, and the surrounding community. All these sources suggested that home parties are settings in Ventura County where excessive alcohol consumption among underage and young adult drinkers can lead to dangerous consequences, and pointed to the need for new community prevention tools.

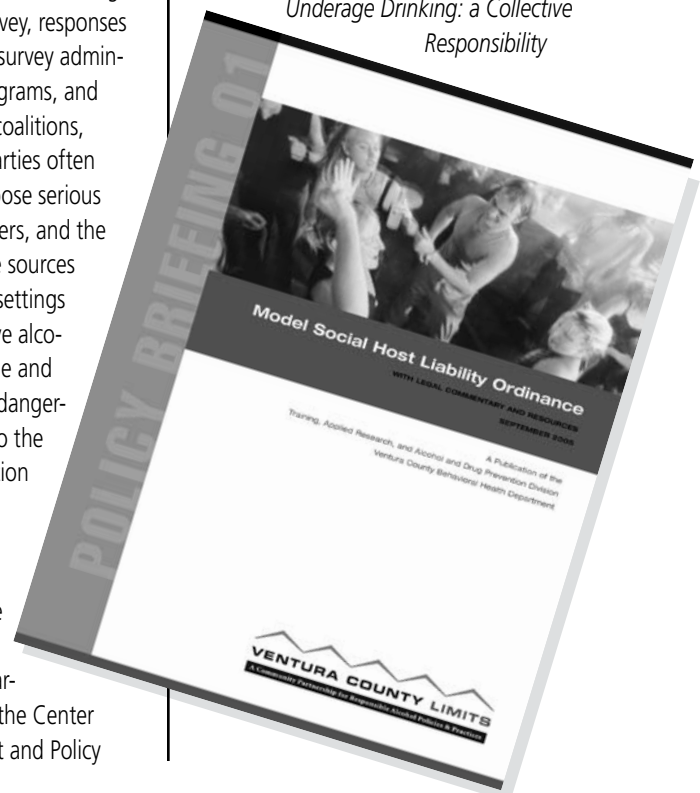
As part of its county-wide initiative to reduce underage and dangerous drinking, including the serious and persistent problems associated with home drinking parties, VCBH, in collaboration with the Center for the Study of Law Enforcement and Policy

(CSLEP) of the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation (PIRE), has developed a *Model Social Host Liability Ordinance*. The model ordinance is designed to aid local governments and other community agencies in the formulation of effective prevention policies.

"A social host ordinance is a strategy for changing social norms around the idea that it is okay for young people to binge drink at parties," said James Mosher, JD, director of CSLEP. "It compliments prevention work on the retail side, because if we work on retail and not social, we aren't going to make much progress in our efforts to reduce this enormous risk."

A Costly Problem

The Institute of Medicine's report *Reducing Underage Drinking: a Collective Responsibility*





Stacy Saetta, JD

estimated the cost of underage drinking to be about \$53 million annually and urged states and localities to enact a comprehensive set of strategies to reduce underage alcohol consumption, including strengthening social host liability laws affecting persons under 21.

In Ventura County, "Nearly three in ten (28.6 percent) of those 25 and younger that binge drink report last doing so in their own homes, and 45.2 percent report last binge drinking at someone else's home," according to a 2005 telephone survey of county residents.

More than 40,000 teens are enrolled in Ventura County high schools, and the county is home to three community colleges, a new state university and a private university. Research has shown that both high-school students and underage college students are most likely to binge drink at private parties.

It seems that many parents are tolerant of private, underage drinking parties because of several misconceptions. First, they believe that alcohol is a relatively harmless drug compared to illegal drugs, and that drinking is part of the passage to adulthood. Second, they believe home parties offer greater safety than other underage drinking scenarios, and third, they believe underage drinking is inevitable.

The intent of the Ventura model Social Host Liability Ordinance is to provide information to municipal governments, private institutions and community coalitions who are formulating responses to the many problems caused by home parties involving underage drinking. The publication challenges these misconceptions, and offers local governments legal options for discouraging

and deterring underage drinking parties, as well as recovering some the public safety costs that repeated unruly parties create for city and county governments.

Focus is Prevention, Not Punishment

Stacy Saetta, JD, primary author of the model ordinance, said she studied a variety of laws and ordinances from around the country before starting her task. She found several ordinances in Northern California and one in San Diego.

"They were all quite simple, and they all focused attention on the criminal liability of the host of the party," Saetta said.

She chose to do something different for the Ventura ordinance; she focused on the response costs involved when police and emergency personnel are called to deal with them often tragic results of an underage drinking party.

Her reasoning?

"Deterrence usually works best when the penalty is swift and certain," she said. "With criminal liability, you have to go through a criminal court case, which may take considerable time, and, in the end, the defendants may be penalized, or they may not.

"We wanted a stronger deterrent level. We're not trying to punish; we're looking at how the community will benefit."

Under the model ordinance, it is suggested that social hosts would receive a strong warning and perhaps a fine for the first offense. Should they offend again, "Costs can really pile up," Saetta said. "They could be in the thousands of dollars."

"This is a much more effective way to bring these issues to the community," Mosher said. "Things don't get slowed down in the criminal courts, and with the cost-recovery provisions that reimburse local governments, there is a much greater likelihood that these ordinances will be enforced."

The model ordinance was designed to address communities of diverse settings and needs, such as those in Ventura County, which range from rural farming communities, to coastal cities, to suburban subdivisions.

It also takes into consideration various concerns of municipalities with respect to effectively deterring loud, unruly or dangerous parties in private settings, using clear explanations of the different types of Social Host Liability and presenting options for imposing fees and recovering costs associated with law enforcement, fire, or other emergency response services.

Meeting a Local Policy Need

But why would a local municipality need such an ordinance? Aren't there already laws in effect that prohibit underage drinking and purchasing alcohol for minors?

Actually, it is against the law in California to furnish alcohol to underage persons and for youth to possess alcohol when on public property. However, state law does not prohibit youth possession on private property, and it does not prohibit youth consumption anywhere.

Thus, without a local ordinance, police or sheriff's officers who detect an underage party may not have legal grounds to enter the premises, to confiscate alcohol, or hold the adult homeowner, or landlord responsible for allowing the party on the premises.

Saetta said an ordinance similar to the model she wrote was adopted recently by the city of Santa Cruz.

Among the highlights of the model ordinance report are the following:

- It recognizes that the occurrence of loud or unruly parties on private property where alcoholic beverages are served to, or consumed by, underage persons is harmful to the underage persons themselves, is a threat to public health, safety, quiet enjoyment of residential property and general welfare, and constitutes a public nuisance.
- It recognizes that persons responsible for the occurrence of loud or unruly parties on private property over which they have possession or control have a duty to ensure that alcoholic beverages are not served to, or consumed by, underage persons at these parties.

It seems that many parents are tolerant of private, underage drinking parties because of several misconceptions.

- It recognizes that landlords have a duty to prevent the occurrence of loud or unruly parties, including those where alcoholic beverages are served to, or consumed by, underage persons, on private property they lease to tenants, even if they do not have day-to-day, physical control of the property.
- It recognizes that law enforcement, fire, or other emergency responders often need to respond multiple times to disperse underage drinking parties, resulting in a disproportionate expenditure of the public safety resources on these parties, delaying police responses to regular and emergency calls, and reducing police calls to the rest of a community.
- It recognizes that cities and counties require a variety of enforcement strategies to abate underage drinking parties under varying circumstances and that present law constrains the ability of law enforcement to deter underage drinking parties and other gatherings.
- As a primary strategy for deterring underage drinking parties on private property, imposes a civil fee against social hosts (including tenants) and/or landowners (including landlords) for the recovery of specified costs associated with providing law enforcement, fire, or other emergency response services on multiple occasions to the scene of a loud or unruly party where alcoholic beverages are served to, or consumed by, underage persons.
- It provides option of imposing criminal penalties in cases of egregious circumstances or recalcitrant offenders.

So far, the cities of Fillmore and Ojai, and the County of Ventura, have begun to use the document as they develop ways to protect community health and safety by holding the hosts of dangerous parties accountable. □

For more information on social host liability and Ventura County Limits, please visit www.ventura-countylimits.org

MANAGING RETAIL ALCOHOL AVAILABILITY IN VENTURA

THE CITY OF VENTURA has adopted a new ordinance that will shape the way in which new alcohol licenses are granted in the city, establish tougher standards for all businesses that sell alcohol, and provide an ongoing source of revenue for a dedicated police officer to deal exclusively with alcohol-related issues.

The comprehensive action came in response to ongoing concerns expressed by large number of community members and community coalitions regarding alcohol sales and licensing procedures in the city and the preponderance of alcohol-related police calls for service.

Ventura, with a population of 104,300, currently is home to 311 alcohol licensees, the third largest number of alcohol licensees per capita in the state. The new ordinance requires alcohol outlets, including liquor stores, restaurants and nightclubs, to pay fees that will ultimately fund the new police officer position.

"We felt it was critical on two levels that we take a fresh approach to alcohol abuse prevention," said Rick Cole, Ventura City Manager. "First, the state has been experiencing budget cuts, and that means their regulatory activity has been cut back. Second, the prevention of alcohol abuse is everyone's business."

Cole said that recognizing the city's alcohol problems and formulating a plan to address them had brought together Ventura city officials,

health advocacy organizations, individual citizens and local businesses.

"Through this ordinance, we are all contributing to alcohol having its place and not spilling over to social pathologies that can hurt people and wreck lives," he said.

Ventura Police Lieutenant Dave Wilson said the new police officer will have far more work than one person can handle, but will help the department deal with a longstanding problem.

"We probably really need ten officers to handle the situation," Wilson said. "But this one officer can monitor the problem and educate other officers on how to best to handle alcohol-related issues."

Over the past few years, community groups, community coalitions and individuals have brought their concerns about alcohol-related problems to city officials. In February 2004, the City Council directed staff to review alcohol sales and licensing procedures and study what other cities were doing in regard to the issue.

In June 2004, the City Council determined that they wanted to give the issue further consideration and also hear from the business community.

In August 2004, representatives of the city Planning Department and the city Police Department met with members of the Chamber of Commerce to discuss how to improve the situation. Police noted that alcohol was not only involved in 18 percent of all its calls and 43 percent



(L-R) Lt. Dave Wilson, Ventura Police; City Manager Rick Cole, and Lt. Quinn Fenwick, Ventura Police

NEW ALCOHOL FEE STRUCTURE

Ventura's City Council approved the new alcohol fee on November 14, 2005. Vendors who sell alcohol in Ventura would be required to pay annual fees ranging from \$250 to \$1,700 based on the following components:

- Risk: Establishments such as bars, taverns, liquor stores and convenience stores would be considered high risk and pay more on the sliding scale. Others would be considered medium or low risk and pay less.
- Hours: Determined by the latest hour in which a business serves alcohol. High-risk establishments sell after midnight; medium vendors stop at midnight, and low vendors stop at 10 p.m.
- Volume: Determined by the dollar amount of a business's wholesale alcohol purchases for a year. High risk is more than \$100,000; medium is \$50,001 to \$100,000; low is \$0 to \$50,000.
- Entertainment: Businesses that provide entertainment pay an additional \$300 a year.

of its arrests, but was also a factor in 53 percent of all fights and disturbances and 60 percent of all domestic violence arrests.

However, police officials also said that their department, like the state, was experiencing budget woes, and officers were spread too thin to focus on this particular issue.

Some business owners, fearing new regulations and a potential new fee, protested that the city and police were being "anti-business." However, many business owners joined in the call for a process to help manage retail alcohol availability in the City of Ventura.

"Any time the city government charges a tax or a fee, they are considered anti-business," Wilson said. "We're not anti-business; we're just trying to be sure we have a safe community."

While discussions continued, city staff researched what 19 other cities were doing in regard to this issue. Those cities included several in Ventura County as well as other "benchmark" cities that have similar population sizes, demographics and geography. In particular, they wanted to know if those cities required a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for alcohol regulation. They found, among other things, that Ventura was the only city in Ventura County that did not already use some form of a CUP for new alcohol outlets.

Having appropriate regulations seemed to be an important factor in preventing problems, but enforcement of those regulations – or the lack of it – seemed even more significant. One of the problems in Ventura was that the community relied on the state Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) to enforce certain regulations, but ABC didn't have the necessary resources to deal with issues in a timely manner. In one situation, it took ABC representatives 6 months to respond administratively to a single incident.

In the final analysis, the city determined that a number of things needed to change. These included:

- **Conditional Use Permit**

Limits the number of new alcohol licenses by putting in place a process for setting local conditions for business operations. In order to prevent a proliferation of new licenses in a city that already has an overabundance of them, city staffers suggested that city planners and the Police Department have a say in the approval process. "We will get to say 'no' when there is an application for a bar on a corner where we already have three bars," said Wilson. "We know where the problem areas are."

- **Deemed Approved Ordinance**

An amendment to the Municipal Code creating a Deemed Approved Ordinance to establish standards for existing outlets. This type of ordinance is a nuisance abatement tool which will allow the city to address existing problems and prevent future problems of retailer compliance.

- **Annual Fee.**

The city also decided to establish an annual fee structure that will allow the City to participate in the enforcement of regulations. Each establishment with an active alcohol license will be charged based on a sliding scale. The scale will take into account several factors, including the establishment's volume of alcohol sales, the hours of operation, and whether they provide entertainment. Wilson said that research has shown that the later an establishment stays open, the more problems it has. Also, establishments that provide entertainment generally have customers who stay longer and drink more, two factors that also lead to increased problems. Wilson noted that restaurants and nightclubs will not be the only establishments required to pay. Stores that sell alcohol also will be held responsible. "This isn't an ordinance that says, 'You have a bar, so you have a problem,'" Wilson said. "There are grocery stores that sell a lot of alcohol, and their customers go home, drink, and get into fights. Bars aren't the only source of this problem."

According to Wilson, the City has approved a fee structure that is expected to generate \$180,000 per year—enough to cover a full-time officer's salary, a patrol vehicle for that officer, and related supplies. City Manager Cole observed when the fee was unanimously adopted by the City Council that this was an historic action: creating the first new police officer position in nearly twenty years.

Wilson and others at the Police Department say they are thankful for the significant community participation and the work of local residents in educating the business community, and supporting both the new regulations and the means to pay for them.

City Manager Cole said he is pleased to see both a new ordinance and a new fee for enforcement go into effect at the same time. "An ordinance is only as good as the quality of enforcement," he said. □

TRACING BACK TO THE SOURCE

WHEN UNDERAGE DRINKING LEADS TO TRAGEDY, it can leave a community wondering helplessly how to prevent such incidents. Drinking and driving crashes, alcohol overdoses and alcohol-fueled sexual assaults and other violence seem especially tragic when young people are involved.

Now, in Ventura County and other counties throughout California, communities are receiving help with this issue from a state Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) program called TRACE.

TRACE stands for "Target Responsibility for Alcohol Connected Emergencies," and it strives to reduce the number of alcohol-related deaths and catastrophic injuries among minors by tracing back to the source of the alcohol. Since minors can't obtain alcohol legally, there has to be another source. TRACE tracks backward to find that source and places responsibility where it is due.

Whether it is a store or bar that has sold alcohol or a parent or other adult who has provided alcohol for a person who is under 21, the law has been broken, and ABC and Ventura County would like to have the individuals and businesses who provide alcohol to minors be held legally responsible.

For instance, when 19-year-old Justin Trett of San Luis Obispo was killed and a friend was severely injured in an alcohol-related car crash last December, ABC investigators wanted to know where the alcohol they had consumed had come from. It was an anonymous call from a community member to the San Luis Obispo Police Department that led them down the right trail. The caller suggested the alcohol sale might have taken place at a local convenience store, and ABC investigators worked quickly to obtain the store's surveillance videotape from the night of the crash. It showed Trett and his friend buying beer with the assistance of a 26-year-old transient.

The transient, who was on parole, is now back in jail because of this parole violation. The store is facing a state hearing, with ABC recommending a temporary suspension of its alcohol sales license.

"We don't take this lightly," said Judy Matty, TRACE Program Coordinator. "It (the punishment) may not seem that bad, but even a temporary suspension could severely affect or shut down their business."

While the store can't be faulted for selling alcohol to a 26-year-old customer, Matty said circumstances surrounding the purchase in this case made it clear that the transient was not the intended user.

"It was quite obvious from the videotape who the beer was for," Matty said. "The 19-year-old and his friend selected the beer and carried it to the counter, where the homeless man paid for it."

Another TRACE case involved 19-year-old UC Davis student Eric Holmes, who caused a head-on car crash after attending a keg party. The crash killed the 34-year-old woman who was driving the other car. Holmes, whose blood alcohol level was .15 or almost twice the legal limit, was sentenced to six years in prison, and the 21-year-old who purchased the alcohol for the party, Timothy Gereg, was also arrested and charged.

Ventura County law enforcement officials and preventionists were quick to realize that

TRACE could be a valuable resource locally. When California ABC held a TRACE workshop at an Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention conference in Tucson, it was attended by Chief Deputy Geoff Dean of the Ventura County Sheriff's Department, Ojai Mayor Rae Hanstad, Ventura County Behavioral Health Department Prevention and Applied research Division Manager Kathy Staples, and Commander Mark Ball of the Ventura County Sheriff's Department.

In Ventura County, Judy Matty and Gene Ackley of the ABC TRACE Program met with Staples, Chief Deputy Dean—third in command of the Ventura County Sheriff's Department responsible for all patrol officers countywide and the chair of a multi-agency Law Enforcement Collaborative—Dan Hicks, VCBH Ventura County Limits Project Administrator and the California Highway Patrol to discuss ways in which they might collaborate. Ventura County law enforcement officials and prevention advocates see TRACE as a major resource.

"TRACE is an outstanding program and a very effective resource for us," said Chief Deputy Dean. "Whenever we (members of the sheriff's department) are dealing with a fatal accident or an assault or any crime that may involve young people and alcohol, our primary goal is to apprehend a suspect. We often don't have the resources to trace the alcohol back to its source."



However, tracing the source of that alcohol is "critical," Dean said. "We know that many of our crimes, including 70 percent of our juvenile sexual assaults, involve alcohol. You'd have to say that's critical."

Matty said that ABC will be offering training to local law enforcement agencies and also conducting a widespread public information campaign in Ventura County in the coming months. While law enforcement is already onboard, community support is "essential" to TRACE's success, Matty said. The community needs to not only support local law enforcement in its efforts, but also accept the importance of this issue.

"Too often, it is not considered a crime to provide alcohol to minors," Matty said. "We want people to know that we take it very seriously." Matty said that while TRACE primarily depends on law enforcement officers for information, assistance and information from individual citizens is also very welcome.

Community members may also be able to provide useful tips for ABC investigations, as in the San Luis Obispo case described above. Or, they may be the ones to alert law enforcement to an incident that should be investigated. Matty said there will be ongoing discussions about how best TRACE can serve the various areas of Ventura County.

"We hope to tailor the program to the different communities," she said. "Different communities have different issues."

The TRACE program was unveiled in April, 2004, by the ABC and State Attorney General Bill Lockyer.

"We have seen too many tragedies involving under-aged drinking, and we all must do our part to prevent them," Lockyer said at the time. "This collaborative effort will ensure that law enforcement agencies investigating alcohol-related deaths and injuries will take steps to determine the source of the alcohol, and that businesses that provide liquor to under-aged drinkers will face prosecution and harsh penalties, including the loss of their liquor licenses."

Lockyer became interested in such a program after meeting the mother of 20-year-old Casey Goodwin, an Exeter woman who was killed in 2003 in an alcohol-related crash. The crash was caused by an 18-year-old intoxicated driver.

Ironically, Casey Goodwin was a college student who had fought under-age drinking in high school as a member of the Friday Night Live organization. Her mother, Lynne Goodwin, was an alcohol prevention specialist for Tulare County.

Lockyer convened a task force to address the issue of under-age drinking, and Mrs. Goodwin became a member of the task force.

The group developed a new protocol for law enforcement officers to use when investigating alcohol-related incidents involving minors. Under the protocol, officers are expected to try to determine where the alcohol involved came from and provide that information to ABC.

TRACE investigators are available 24 hours a day to respond to law enforcement calls and to work collaboratively with local law enforcement agencies. When officers are collecting evidence, they are expected to be alert to items such as false IDs, liquor outlet receipts and liquor outlet bags. Any evidence they find regarding under-age consumption of alcohol is to be provided to ABC investigators immediately.

That's because speed is of the essence when using the TRACE protocol and contacting ABC, Matty said. "There is a greater likelihood of a successful investigation when witnesses are identified, statements taken and evidence collected in the first hours after an incident occurs. ABC welcomes calls at all hours and is heartened when TRACE investigators are included in the initial investigation at the scene."

Matty points out that it is important for communities to know that TRACE is not just about drinking and driving crashes. It is aimed at all types of alcohol-related incidents, whether they be crashes, overdoses, assaults or sexual assaults.

Since the TRACE program was started, ABC has investigated 84 incidents involving 53 deaths and 83 serious injuries. There are currently 25 cases pending, and 21 arrests have been made. The majority of the cases involve alcohol-related traffic incidents.

Matty said that ABC is so opposed to the crime of supplying under-age drinkers that it supports the idea of making the act a felony when it results in serious injury or death.

"We'd like to think that people won't provide alcohol to minors because it is the right thing to do," she said. "But when that doesn't work, maybe getting caught will."

The TRACE program is being funded with a two-year grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety.

The program has already received accolades. The California ABC received the National Liquor Law Enforcement Agency's 2004 Innovative Liquor Law Enforcement Program of the Year award.

In addition, two ABC investigators have been honored by California Mothers Against Drunk Driving for their work on a TRACE case. In that case, a clerk at a store in Desert Hot Springs sold beer to a 19-year-old customer. The 19-year-old later crashed his car head-on into another car. Both the 19-year-old and the 17-year-old driver of the other car were killed.

CHP investigators at the crash scene placed a call to TRACE and told ABC investigators they had found beer in the 19-year-old's car, and the beer was still cold. That meant that the alcohol had probably been obtained in the hours just prior to the crash. ABC investigators asked the coroner for a description of the teen driver and what he was wearing. They then went to alcohol outlets within a certain radius of the crash scene and began reviewing surveillance tapes. They seized one tape that showed a young male who fit the driver's description purchasing beer at a convenience store.

As a result of the TRACE investigation, the clerk from that store is now being criminally prosecuted, and the store liquor license was suspended for 90 days.

"What we do isn't magic," Matty said. "When we are able to respond quickly and gather the information we need, we are able to do our job."

Two different training videos—one for law enforcement and the other for civic groups—are currently in production. □

**Too often,
it is not
considered
a crime to
provide
alcohol to
minors. We
want people
to know that
we take it
very seriously.**

O&A

WITH CHIEF DEPUTY GEOFF DEAN



Geoff Dean is a Chief Deputy in the Ventura County Sheriff's Department and has been spearheading a collaborative movement among law enforcement agencies to deal with underage drinking and other alcohol problems involving young people. In this interview Dean explains how law enforcement is participating in Ventura County Limits, a prevention partnership working countywide to reduce underage and binge drinking.

How does your position in the Sheriff's Department lead to your concern about preventing underage drinking?

A: I'm a Chief Deputy and I oversee all our field operations for the unincorporated areas and all five of our contract cities in the county of Ventura. I'm responsible for all the officers who are actually out in the field doing the work and the detectives who are doing follow-up investigations. This gives me first-hand contact with what's going on where minors and alcohol are concerned. Probably just as important is the fact that I have two children, a 16-year-old daughter and a 14-year-old son. My daughter is in high school, and is surrounded by the underage drinking problem. I hear stories back from her about what is happening out there. That gives me a personal perspective outside the law enforcement responsibilities that come with my job.

Tell me about the Ventura County Limits project and how you are involved in that.

A: When my work put me in contact with Kathy Staples of the County's Behavioral Health Department, we began discussions about underage drinking and the impact it was having in the county. Then Gary Pentis, a captain who works for me in one of our cities, became very involved and pro-active in a community coalition to deal not only with underage drinking but narcotics and drug abuse in the community. This showed us how the Ventura County Limits program could expand activities throughout all of the sheriff's jurisdictions, which probably covers 70 percent of the areas policed in all of Ventura County.

You recently attended a leadership conference on underage drinking in Tucson. Did you bring back some ideas that would be useful in Ventura County?

A: The conference was just outstanding. They had a multitude of presenters with ideas from agencies that have very practical hands-on application... One important idea taking hold is adoption of a social host ordinance, which holds adults accountable for providing alcohol to minors in a home setting.

Is there a social host ordinance anywhere in Ventura?

A: Not at this time. But one of the Sheriff's contract cities, Ojai, is leading the way toward establishing our first social host ordinance. At a recent coalition meeting I brought together the law enforcement leaders in the county from all the different agencies and shared with them how the new model social host ordinance would work. They are taking it back to their cities and jurisdictions and will try to move something forward consistently throughout the county.

The fact you are focusing on a social host ordinance would indicate that you see a special problem with home parties.

A: Law enforcement has done a lot of work in regulating commercial establishments. We work closely with the state Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control, but we probably haven't done as much as we need to do in dealing with home parties. When you get a call about a noisy party the historical response is for deputies or officers to go to the house, and if it were a large gathering with lots of kids drinking, they might decide to cite the kids on the outside, but their objective and goal was to break up the party and have a

peaceful resolution to the whole problem. What we are moving towards now is to establish some accountability. We want to track down who provided the alcohol, where the alcohol came from, and hold these people accountable because they are in essence the source of the problem. We have already established changes of the policy for our patrol officers.

Are the Place of Last Drink surveys from the Behavioral Health Department helping out with this??

A: Not in regard to social host or home parties. When people are arrested for driving under the influence they have to go to a DUI school, and at that school they have to fill out a form providing the location of the last drink they had before they were arrested. Recently Behavioral Health re-evaluated their Place of Last Drink data and put it in more usable format and, through an agreement with the Sheriffs Department, distributed it to all the local agencies. This is a good tool for us to use in establishing what locations might be providing excessive amounts of alcohol to their customers, causing a higher number of DUI arrests.

Does the state Alcoholic Beverage Control Department get involved in cracking down on these locations?

A: That was another positive idea that came out of the Tucson conference. ABC has a program called TRACE. When there is a critical incident involving an underage person who has been drinking, ABC will send out an investigator immediately to assist in tracking down the source of that alcohol. It could be a sexual assault or a serious traffic collision, as an example. But if it involved someone who was underage using alcohol, ABC is very responsive in assisting the law enforcement agency in tracking down the source of the alcohol.

Lately you have been active in organizing a Law Enforcement Collaborative in Ventura County to work on underage drinking problems. How is that going to work?

A: The purpose is to share information and work together to try to put a dent in this problem of underage drinking. So far we have had one initial meeting where we brought together representatives from all the agencies in the county, including all the Sheriff's contract cities and all the independent police departments. We distributed some information about the social host ordinance, and we're following up with them to see what progress they're making in moving toward adopting a social host ordinance. We also want to find out if the Place of Last Drink information is helpful to them, and how else we can work collaboratively to deal with the underage drinking. For example, if one city adopts a social host ordinance it won't be long before the people providing the alcohol know they have to move to another city without such an ordinance and have the party there.

What can the Collaborative accomplish that could not be done if everyone were doing his own thing.

A: I think in this time of restrictions on governmental resources—fewer people and leaner budgets—the concept of not reinventing the wheel is extremely important. Let's learn from what other people are doing. Oxnard, for example, charges all of their ABC licensed establishments a fee, and the money from that fee goes to pay for an alcohol compliance officer. That's a great idea—a great way to fund someone to go out and actually keep track of all these establishments. ABC doesn't have the resources to do that, and local agencies are really strained to be able to dedicate people for such an assignment.

Does the public understand and support what you're trying to do?

A: I don't think people really understand the impact of underage drinking. I think they notice the big headline when there's a tragic automobile accident and somebody is seriously injured or killed as a result of underage drinking. What's really downplayed are the day to day facts. For

instance, the majority of sexual assaults against minors involve drinking. And a disproportionate number of gang incidents probably emanate from some event where there is drinking going on. A lot of significant crime issues that affect minors have their roots in alcohol-related gatherings.

What can be done to make people more conscious of these facts?

A: One of the things our law enforcement collaborative can do is set up a coordinated PR campaign to inform the public of how many sexual assaults on young girls in their town involve alcohol, how many gang-related shootings or other acts of violence in their town involve alcohol. We need to work together so we're all saying the same thing and getting the word out to the public, so it's brought to everybody's attention. When this happens it won't be an acceptable thing for a parent to say, "I'm going to have alcohol for kids at my house because I figure they'll go do it any way."

Can the schools help with that?

A: I think a good place for schools to start is with athletes. They should have athletes sign an agreement that they won't use alcohol. And the important thing is that there has to be accountability attached to it. If an athlete signs the agreement and becomes a star and then is found out drinking and driving somewhere, we can't turn our heads the other way because he's a star athlete. We ran a program in one of our schools, and everybody agreed on the no-alcohol promise except the football coach. I would hope that a school board or an administrator would step in and say, you know, we're all going to do this because it's an important issue.

Are you encouraged or discouraged by the progress being made in preventing underage drinking.

A: There's some small things we can do to at least put a dent in it. We're never going to stop kids from drinking. But this doesn't mean that adults have to make it easy for them. If we can reduce underage drinking by 25 percent, that's 25 percent fewer sexual assaults and 25 percent fewer kids being killed in traffic accidents involving alcohol. And that's well worth our effort.