

newsworthy trends

Parents Get Credit For Drop In Underage Drinking

(NAPSA)—According to government reports, underage drinking has declined steadily for almost two decades nationally. This has resulted in fewer teenage drunk driving crashes, less drinking by high school students and decreased drinking by college students under the legal age.

While stricter enforcement of existing laws gets much of the credit, experts say that increased involvement on the part of parents in talking with their children and even better efforts by retailers of alcohol beverages are having a major impact.

For example, many bars, taverns, convenience stores and other retailers provide training for their employees in techniques to better deal with underage drinking situations.

One of the largest server training programs, called TIPS (Training For Intervention Procedures), conducts hundreds of training sessions each year. Alcohol beverage companies like Anheuser-Busch and its beer distributors often pay for the training, which typically lasts several hours.

Another program that's helping is called We ID. This program puts customers on notice that they will be asked for their ID when purchasing alcohol beverages.

In addition, some retailers have embraced new technology in the fight against illegal underage drinking. New devices, called electronic ID checkers, "read" the data encoded on the magnetic strip on the back of drivers licenses.

While these electronic ID checkers are still in the early phases, retailers say they're effective in helping employees determine if ID's are legitimate.

Police officials say the fake ID business is flourishing and more help is needed. Not only are today's fake ID's better quality, but they're easier to obtain.

Some believe that electronic ID checkers will become commonplace. In fact, 7-Eleven stores in California are equipped with this technology and company officials say electronic ID checkers have a



Many believe that getting parents involved is the key to reducing underage drinking.

major deterrent effect in reducing underage drinking.

However, what many believe is having the most profound effect on preventing underage drinking is the increased level of communication between parents and their children.

Today, more parents are talking with their teens about making smart decisions in life, including whether or not to drink alcoholic beverages.

To help facilitate these often awkward discussions, Anheuser-Busch offers parents free materials. Called "Family Talk About Drinking," this discussion guide and video helps parents talk with their kids so they understand what's expected of them, how to deal with peer pressure and the consequences of their decisions. Parents can order these materials by calling 1-800-359-TALK.

Given this broad range of programs, policy makers are increasingly saying no to proposals to add more underage drinking laws.

"There are hundreds of laws on the books about underage drinking," says Rich Keating, vice president and senior government affairs officer for Anheuser-Busch. "What we need to focus on," said Keating, "is enforcing those laws and encouraging voluntary efforts which have been proven to be effective."

To learn more, visit the site at www.beeresponsible.com.