



NORTH BEACH SUN FALL 2006

Dare Coalition Against Substance Abuse One Young Person at a Time

Earlier this year as the summer tourist season got into full swing, the Dare Coalition Against Substance Abuse (CASA) conducted an Alcohol Purchase Survey among Dare County merchants licensed to sell beer for off-premise consumption. The survey, made possible through a Prevent Underage Drinking initiative sponsored by the US Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, was designed to determine which stores' clerks would sell beer without checking a valid ID to individuals who although they were at least 21 years old, did not appear to be of legal drinking age. The survey's intent was simply data collection-part of the coalition's effort to raise awareness about the availability of alcohol to minors in Dare County.

At the completion of the survey period, thirty-eight of the county's seventy-one licensed outlets had been surveyed. Fifty-eight percent of the stores surveyed did not allow the sale, but 42% did. Although stores that did not properly check IDs were not actually breaking the law, they were running the risk of doing so. The questionable sales were often made at high volume beer outlets, such as convenience and grocery stores. The conclusion drawn was that the clerks forgot or they consciously bypassed this required step to simply save time. The survey raised a red flag for local merchants that they must be vigilant in training and monitoring their employees to assure that their stores are not selling alcohol to minors under any circumstances.

During the summer, owners of stores that were surveyed were notified. Stores whose clerks did their job correctly were publicly acknowledged; the others were privately urged to commit to assuring that all their employees are clear on the procedures for checking IDs. The coalition will conduct alcohol purchases additional surveys later in the year and again in spring 2007

In early August, Carol Hartman, acting as CASA's Prevent Underage Drinking liaison, met with other North Carolina coalition leaders who are members of the state's Prevent Underage Drinking Task Force to share each coalition's survey results. First Lady Mary Easley, as National Co-Chair of the Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free participated in this meeting.

According to Ms Hartman, the acceleration of underage drinking in the US has recently been called a "devastating tidal wave of alcohol harm. According to a National Academy of Science study, alcohol is the most commonly used drug among America's youth exceeding both tobacco and marijuana. This study also reported that each day, more than 7,000 children under the age of 16 take their first drink and one in five eighth-graders is a current drinker. Alcohol kills four times more children than all illegal drugs combined."

Nearly 18% of all alcohol sales are to underage drinkers, representing nearly \$23 billion dollars in profits annually to the alcohol industry. At the same time, according to information recently published by the International Institute for Alcohol Awareness, underage drinking costs America \$62 billion a year in medical care, lost productivity, and other pain and suffering for young drinkers. Similarly, underage drinking costs the citizens of North Carolina over \$1.3 billion annually.

"On the Outer Banks, curbing underage drinking is a collective community responsibility" according to Nicole Martin, Dare CASA's Chairperson. "Although we are concerned about the availability of alcohol for purchase locally, our children's welfare ultimately starts at home. The coalition is planning additional educational events to alert parents to the dangers of underage drinking and to share with them proven positive steps to take to prevent the tragic consequences that occur when you mix adolescents and alcohol.

For more information about how you can become involved in the Dare Coalition Against Substance Abuse, call (252) 449-2272 or visit www.darecasa.org

