

# Chisago County: Sharing The Priority Of Preventing Underage Drinking

*"Controlling the distribution of alcohol" is a primary goal of every municipal liquor operation. However, in many communities, alcohol beverage retailers (both municipal and private) are singled out in programs / policies designed to prevent youth from obtaining alcohol.*

*Retailers have always been willing to accept their portion of the responsibility. But often, other groups and individuals involved in this issue have been reluctant.*

*Chisago County is different. There, the priority of keeping alcohol out of the hands of kids is shared by the retailers, judges, prosecutors, local police officers, school staff, public health and more.*

*The following three articles detail the important attitudes and efforts occurring in that area of Minnesota.*

## Chisago County Sheriff Todd Rivard

I was talking with one of my former deputies who now works for a local police department. He gave me some of the best news I've heard recently. Kids told him that the word is out that you better not drink underage in Chisago County. Better than any citation or arrest data that come across my desk, that news told me that we're making a difference.

I didn't sit down as Sheriff and decide that underage drinking is a top concern in our community. I heard it from parents and residents. I certainly heard it after the Anderson snowmobile crash. Chisago County wants to keep our kids safe from the dangers of underage drinking.

We realize that kids who drink are more likely to get injured. When alcohol is involved, it is easier for tempers to flare and fights to start. Kids who drink

underage are more likely to drink and drive, ride with an impaired driver and experience problems in school. It is our responsibility to help protect kids from these problems.

Agencies from across Chisago County have been meeting to decide how we can better prevent and respond to underage drinking. I think Chisago County has been doing a good job in this area, but we wanted to know what else we can do. Judges, prosecutors, local police officers, school staff and public health got together to make sure we had a common direction and shared priorities.

Our shared priority is to reduce underage drinking by focusing on the source of alcohol. We can swat bees all day long, but we really get something done when we focus on the nest. If kids can't get alcohol, they can't drink it.

The most common sources of alcohol that we've found are friends over the age of 21 and older brothers and sisters. One of the worst things I see is when parents give alcohol to their kids and their kids' friends.

Although it is legal for parents to provide alcohol to their child, it must be in their own home and under their direct supervision. It is certainly illegal to give alcohol to someone else's child at any time.

To make an even bigger difference in underage drinking, we put together a law enforcement task force. Officers from the Sheriff's department and the local police departments have been trained in how to investigate and determine who provided the alcohol. Now when an underage drinking party is found, the task force members are paged and respond to the party. Not only are the underage drinkers charged but also the illegal providers of alcohol.

In the two months since we started this project, we've cited 68 minors for consuming alcohol and we've charged 6 people with providing alcohol to a minor. We know the word is getting out and we're making a difference.

How can you as a parent or resident get involved and help us make a difference?

1. Don't provide alcohol to kids.
2. If you know someone who has recently turned 21, talk to him or her about the risks of providing alcohol to minors. It may be hard to say no to a friend or younger sibling, but it is a lot easier than saying hello to a judge.
3. Know what your kids are doing. Where are they? Who are they with? What are they doing? You aren't being a snoop; you're being a good parent.
4. If you know of or suspect an underage drinking party, call 911. You can remain anonymous if you'd prefer.
5. Remember, even if they won't admit it, kids learn from watching the adults around them. Set a good example for them to follow.

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up humans developed strategies to isolate and better compare vertical and horizontal dimensions.

But the tendency to overestimate the vertical dimension persisted in a second experiment conducted by Wansink. He used the same basic procedure of the teenager study to measure how much juice was poured by 89 adults eating breakfast at a camp in western Massachusetts. The group ranged from 16 to 82, with an average age of 37.

The adults poured and consumed 19.2 percent more juice in the short wide glass than in the tall slender glass (6.8 ounces versus 5.7 ounces). "These results were consistent with Piaget's notion that older people are less likely to focus their attention merely on the vertical dimension and are better able to account for the other dimensions as well. Still age did not eliminate the elongation effect," Wansink wrote.

The adults, like the teenagers, mistakenly perceived that they had poured less into the wide glasses than into tall, slender glasses. Seventy-nine percent of the adults given the wide, short glasses underestimated how much they poured, as compared with 17 percent of those given tall glasses.

When informed of the overpouring, most of the adults expressed surprise. "We heard remarks like 'You're kidding' and 'Can you weigh it and show me?'" which is consistent with the general lack of awareness by participants of how much they actually poured," Wansink said in an interview.

In a final study, Wansink examined how accurately bartenders could estimate drink volumes. He asked 45 bartenders in Philadelphia to pour 1.5 ounces of liquor into drink glasses. Half the bartenders were given slender highball glasses, and the others had short tumbler glasses. Each glass held 12 ounces. The bartenders were asked to pour rum for a rum and Coke, whiskey for a whiskey on the rocks and vodka for a vodka tonic.

On average, the bartenders poured 31.3 percent more into the tumbler glass than into the highball glass (2.1 ounces versus 1.6 ounces).

Less experienced bartenders tended to over-pour more (2.2 ounces in tumblers versus 1.6 ounces in highball glasses), but even bartenders with an average of nine years of experience poured 1.8 ounces in the short glass compared with 1.7 ounces in the tall glass.

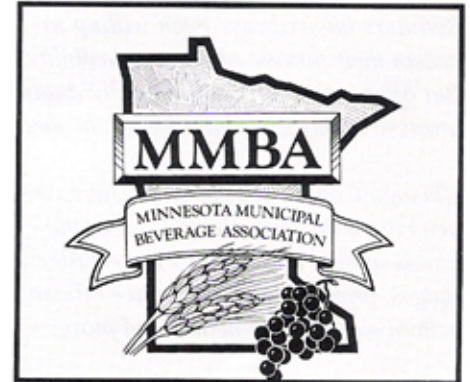
There are various policy implications in these findings, according to Wansink. The tricks of the eye and brain could play havoc with dieters seeking to monitor and better control food and beverage consumption.

"Because people believe there is greater capacity in a tall, slender glass, they will pour less into it, but thinking the opposite with a short, wide glass, will keep pouring," the researcher said.

Aside from over-consumption of alcohol, inadvertent over-pouring of medications and over-the-counter drugs could pose a potential health risk.

*Wansink's paper is titled "Bottoms Up! The Influence of Elongation on Pouring and Consumption Volumes."*

*This story has been adapted from a news release issued by University Of Illinois At Urbana-Champaign.*





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## Chisago County Attorney Katherine Johnson

I am a person who would rather stop a crime from happening. I am excited to be part of a project that gives us a chance to protect our children from harm before it happens.

Last week Sheriff Rivard wrote about a project in which we are reducing underage drinking by targeting the providers of alcohol. Our community is sending the message that we can and will keep our kids safe, and people are listening.

Our project also involves the consequences for those who don't listen to our message. There are serious legal consequences when someone under 21 consumes alcohol, both for the young drinker and for the person who gave them alcohol. Chisago County has made some significant changes in how these cases are handled.

Anyone in Chisago County who is charged with underage consumption must now appear in court. This court appearance not only sends a message to the underage drinker that this is a serious offense, but also allows us to know more about what is happening with that young person. These offenders must provide information about their chemical use, which is used to make recommendations to help them address problems they may have. Underage drinkers are being sentenced to community service crews, education classes, fines and probation.

Providing alcohol to a minor is even more serious. A person who gives alcohol to someone under 21 faces a gross misdemeanor charge, which can result in up to a year in jail and a \$3,000 fine. A gross misdemeanor goes on a person's permanent record. The consequences imposed by the court upon conviction are only the beginning. Many employers conduct background checks, and this conviction will appear.

It is important for the community to realize that we are not the only ones who can send a message about underage drinking. In fact, we know that parents have much more influence with their kids.

We know that kids learn from how their parents react to their underage drinking charge. If parents dismiss the situation with, "at least it is only alcohol," kids get the message that they can continue drinking. These are the kids that we see first for underage drinking but often again for burglary, other drug use or domestic violence.

On the other hand, parents can help kids find a different path. If your child is cited for underage drinking, talk about what happened. Explain why you are concerned about underage drinking and your expectations that it will not

happen again. This is also a good opportunity to let your kids know you love them and are concerned for their safety.

I have four children and four grandchildren myself. I know what it is like to worry about your kids. I know too many parents who have lost kids to senseless acts that could have been prevented. I am glad that as a community we are doing something to prevent underage drinking and to help kids who have made some bad choices.

## Chisago County Judge Doug Swenson

In the last several months, often sitting across meeting room tables from so many Chisago County folks, I have been struck by how committed we are

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