



# MICAP RECAP

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Dear Members and Other Friends,

This issue of MICAP-RECAP features an article by Jack Kresnak\* This is also the third issue on the broad theme of Taxation and Beverage Alcohol. Jack's article appeared first as a COMMENT piece in the Detroit Free Press of March 18, 2009. Jack has the statistics and information to back up the "nickel-a-drink" concept that I proposed in our last MICAP-RECAP for the federal government to establish. Jack is applying it to Michigan's situation. He is applying it only to beer. MICAP's strong suggestion is for beer, wine, and mixed drinks, all three. Since the FEDS haven't done it yet, let's get Lansing to do it. If you wish to support this, please write to your legislators.

Rev. Douglas Leffler, a retired member of the Detroit Conference, United Methodist Church and a MICAP Board Member for many years, has written the second article: GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF ALCOHOLISM. You'll want to read it and call your local school district to encourage it to use the "Michigan Model" to get information to our children and youth about the dangers and consequences of the use of beverage alcohol, smoking, other drugs and gambling..

Graduation time is almost here. We're ready for it this year with a suggestion for local church committees to pass the rumor along about the illegality and danger of underage drinking. So, pass the rumor and do your friends and colleagues a favor. Let's keep our kids alcohol and drug free as well as legal at their celebrations!

Finally, while we just celebrated in our last MICAP-RECAP the defeat of HB4573, I already have word from a couple of our state representatives that new legislation has been introduced for more sales hours. This time the Liquor Lobby is talking as if it is agreeing to higher licensing fees if it gets longer sales hours. Who sets our licensing fees anyway? They or MLCC?. There is also an opt-out bill which has begun to make its way through the legislature. In its present form, governmental units that do not want longer sales hours have to opt-out by statute. This is bad social legislation and will only work in favor of sellers because there are hundreds of governmental units that will have to enact legislation against the provision.

Thank you for your continued support of MICAP. I hope the information below will be helpful to you as, together, we seek to share our concerns with a broader society.

Sincerely,

Rev. W. J. (Bill) Amundsen, Editor  
President, Board of Directors, AADIF (dba MICAP)

## GUEST ARTICLE

# ADD A NICKEL TO BEER TO HELP PROTECT KIDS

BY JACK KRESNAK\*

Did you enjoy yourself celebrating St. Patrick's Day? Let's hope you danced an Irish jig and sang "Danny Boy" with your friends at the top of your lungs.... Exactly how we came to celebrate an Irish saint -- who actually was born in Scotland to Roman parents and then enslaved at age 14 by Irish pagans -- by drinking copious amounts of beer is beyond my ken. I suppose there is about as much connection between St. Patrick and beer as there is between beer and what I am about to propose -- a child protective tax.

The average yearly per capita consumption of beer in our state is more than 20 gallons. (But) our fondness for beer comes with hidden costs: fights between friends, drunken driving, abusive parents, (and) lost productivity. (I propose a small cost that would help protect against child abuse and neglect in Michigan): Pay a nickel; save a child!

Five cents per can or bottle of beer would generate more than \$111 million per year in Michigan, which could be earmarked for child abuse and neglect prevention programs that help struggling parents keep their children out of foster care.

Funding for such programs is inadequate now. But, facing a structural budget deficit of more than \$1.4 billion, Gov. Jennifer Granholm has proposed cutting ALL state funding. If the Legislature approves those cuts, it is a virtual guarantee that hundreds, perhaps thousands, of more children will be harmed and enter the state's expensive foster care system.

Take Michigan's Zero-to-Three Secondary Prevention programs (\$6.4 million) that work with parents of young children identified as at risk for abuse or neglect. It costs \$10 per family, per day, for programs that, according to the Children's Trust Fund, have kept nearly all of the children in those families out of foster care. Foster care, by the way, costs taxpayers an average of \$57 per day per child. Funding the Zero-to-Three programs, -- which now exist in just 56 of our 83 counties -- is not only morally right but fiscally smart.

Besides that program, the governor proposes to eliminate funding for the Great Parents/Great Start program (\$5 million), which encourages early literacy and better parenting; Teen Parent Counseling (\$3.8 million),

which helps teen mothers learn parenting skills; Marriage and Fatherhood Initiatives (\$1.73 million), which promote committed-couple parenting; before and after school programs (\$5 million), which keep kids out of trouble; and the Nurse Family Partnership program (\$2 million), which provides intensive services to at-risk pregnant women and their babies. These are all pro-life, pro-family, and anti-crime programs.

Folks: our state's primary mission is to protect its citizens, especially children. We can't do that when we make spending cuts that mean more kids falling victim to abuse, neglect, delinquency, ill health and school failure. Our state cannot afford any more physically or emotionally damaged children, school dropouts and juvenile delinquents-turned-criminals.

In the absence of any serious effort to address the worsening structural deficit, we must take a hard look at raising the beer tax, which hasn't been changed in more than 40 years. The five-cent per can beer tax increase would begin to repair a frayed safety net for children.

Of course, there will be stiff opposition from the special interests in the business of making, shipping and selling beer. Those companies spend millions every year on advertising, marketing and lobbying activities.

Children, of course, do not vote, nor do they hire lobbyists. Kids also do not benefit from the culture of beer. Many of them are harmed by excessive consumption.

I think five cents a can or bottle is a small price to pay to protect our most vulnerable children.

Pay a nickel; save a child! St. Patrick, I believe, would approve.

\*JACK KRESNAK is president of Michigan's Children, an independent nonpartisan advocacy organization based in Lansing. Write to him in care of the Free Press Editorial Page, 615 W. Lafayette, Detroit, MI 48226 or at [oped@freepress.com](mailto:oped@freepress.com)

# GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE PREVENTION AND TREATMENT OF ALCOHOLISM

BY REV. DOUGLAS LEFFLER, MICAP BOARD MEMBER

Underage drinking, binge drinking, and smoking are huge health hazards in the US. 1400 College students die each year from the drinking of beverage alcohol. Smoking is the No. 1 cause of deaths from lung cancer. College students at Central Michigan University have gambled away money from their parents and from student loans at the Casino in Mt. Pleasant. But now there is good news about prevention and treatment. The Michigan State Board of Education offers curriculum resources for schools, kindergarten through high school, to inform and caution students about the dangers of drinking, smoking, and gambling.

The Michigan Model for Comprehensive School Health Education provides an average of 40 lessons per grade level in K-5 and modules addressing specific health risks in grades 6 – 12. Instruction at middle and high school builds on lessons in K-5. The Gambling Prevention Module, Grades 9 – 12 is called, “Don’t bet on It!” Prevention training is provided for teachers in the use of all lessons. The Michigan Model provides for parents newsletters with three full color grade grouped editions. Entitled “Good For You!” it is published twice a year for discussion and reinforcement at home.

The topics covered in Grade 4 include:

- Reasons individuals choose to drink or not to drink
- Decisions about alcohol and other drug use, impact on family and friends
- Family and friends’ influence over alcohol and other drug use decisions
- Influence of advertising
- Refusal skills

One elementary principal I called reported the curriculum was used in all K-5 classes. A parent with children in grades 3 and 4 reported good discussions with her sons using the parent newsletters. A teacher in another Saginaw school who took training reported that little use was made of the lessons in her school. Pressure to teach for achievement tests and large size classes may discourage use of the lessons. We urge MICAP-RECAP readers to call schools in their communities to urge principals and teachers to use the Michigan Health Education lessons in their classes.

After many years of lobbying by the National association for Mental Health and the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill, Congress passed The Paul Wellstone and Pete Domenici American Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act which requires all health insurance companies to fund treatment for alcohol and drug abuse and mental illness at the same level as funding for all physical illness. This will enable and encourage persons addicted to alcohol and other drugs to get treatment. Your contributions to MICAP have helped us to win these victories as well.

**GRADUATION PARTIES  
ARE BEING PLANNED...  
PREPARE!**

Most of the time, RUMORS are not what are wanted. But there are exceptions to that rule when we want to get information out and really have people take note. The "Rumor Mill" may occasionally be the vehicle of choice to get the information out to those for whom it is intended.

This may be true of Graduation, or Prom, or Birthday Parties when several teens (under 21s) are invited. It's a time of celebration and festivities. When my wife and I went to a party last year we were pleasantly surprised to find out there was no beverage alcohol being served. When I complimented the parents, I was surprised by their response: "Our son indicated that he did not want to have any beverage alcohol at his party!" Not only were they raising a wise son, but it is the law as well. There are national media campaigns to discourage parents from providing beverage alcohol at birthday parties, graduation parties, and even proms. And there are legal ramifications as well. Several years ago, the wife of an auto czar in Detroit served beverage alcohol to underage persons who attended her party. The incident was reported to the police, fines were paid, and community service time was served to say nothing of the embarrassment to the family and community.

So, be safe, and be helpful to your under-21s. No beverage alcohol at the Celebration of your son's or daughter's graduation or prom. And whenever you serve, it is the responsibility of the host to be sure that no one under 21 years of age is served or consumes beverage alcohol on the premises. You could be reported. And, you are responsible if anything happens as a consequence of underage drinking.

Local church mission committees, social concern committees, men's groups and women's groups: This may be a good task for your group at this time of the year: Pass the rumor along to those whom you know are planning a graduation (or other) party at the end of the school year. Let's keep our kids safe by keeping underage drinking to a minimum as well.

**OUR ANNUAL AND OTHER  
BOARD MEETINGS:**

Board Meetings have been changed from the THIRD Tuesday to the FIRST Tuesday. Our next meeting will be held at Central United Methodist Church (215 North Capitol Avenue, Lansing, Michigan 48933) on May 5, 2009 from 12 Noon to 3:00 p.m. This is our Annual Meeting and visitors are welcome. Please let your presence be known ahead of time by calling 517.323.2445 so we may have adequate lunch provisions. Other 2009 Board meetings will be held on August 4, and November 3 at the same place and time.

**YOUR GIFTS ARE REALLY  
APPRECIATED:**

Especially in this down economy, your gifts are really appreciated! By using volunteers instead of paying staff, and by cutting costs and raising funds, the Board has nearly erased a formidable debt in these past five years. At the same time, our MICAP-RECAP has been resumed. We're sending out vital information about the bad consequences of the use and abuse of beverage alcohol, other drugs, tobacco, and gambling. Also with your help, we have fought off the additional hours of sales of beverage alcohol. Your gifts have enabled us to do all of this. Thank you for your support! Your use of the enclosed envelope is also appreciated!