

SAMPLE – LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Dear Editor,

Fred Brew totally misstated both the nature and the consequences of underage drinking in his January 20, 1999 article, “Teens and Booze.” Mr. Brew wrote that underage drinking is a “rite of passage” which young people will inevitably outgrow. The tragic reality is that drinking is dangerous — and often deadly — for young people.

Alcohol affects young people, whose bodies are continuing to mature, very differently than adults. According to a study by the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21. Nationally, twenty-two percent of eighth graders report drinking monthly.

There are serious public health consequences if we continue to view underage drinking as simply a “rite of passage” because the passage may be to an emergency room or even a morgue. The leading cause of death among young people is traffic crashes. Last year in our community, ____ (insert number) young people died in alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes. How many will there be this year if we continue to turn a blind eye to this serious problem?

Auto crashes are not the only dangers associated with underage drinking. That eighth grade student who starts drinking today may become the alcoholic of tomorrow, increasing the health risks to themselves and others. Young people who have been drinking are more likely to be involved in date rapes as both victims and perpetrators, to commit or suffer other crimes, to drown or to be injured in a fall or other accident. Students who are heavy drinkers often fare poorly academically and may disrupt classes or school activities.

Concerned adults and youth in our community have joined together to form the _____ Coalition to prevent underage drinking and its potentially devastating consequences. We urge young people, parents, business and religious leaders, educators, enforcement officials, medical professionals and anyone else interested in this issue to join us in working to keep our youth safe and sober. We owe it to them.

Sincerely,

Jane Smith
Executive Director
The _____ Coalition