



**Missouri's
Youth/Adult
Alliance**



Dear Colleague,

By holding this Community Tool Kit in your hands, you are making a statement for yourself and the organization you represent. Your group is saying, in effect, “We care about the conditions of society that affect our families, our schools, our communities.”

Your passion shows; you do what you can to get involved in your communities, to be supportive, to promote environments where the use of alcohol by underage drinkers is unacceptable. You model healthy decision-making for your young people. You are available when tasks need to be done because the future of your community depends on you and others like you.

This work can be exhausting. Why? Because, as change agents, our aim is to change the very way we look at the use of alcohol in our society, particularly in how it encourages children to begin consuming alcohol at young ages. That is a tall order for individual community citizens. The key is to engage the powerful tools in our culture that shape public opinion and norms in the delivery of our messages of change.

This tool kit, produced by Missouri's Youth/Adult Alliance, a Robert Wood Johnson Foundation reducing underage drinking coalition, offers your organization a strategic way of thinking and acting that will help you influence public opinion and norms in your community. It will help you mobilize and organize.

Prevention experts tell us that social norms, along with availability and regulations, are the three forces in a community that shape both healthy and unhealthy behaviors. We concur with the experts that when communities embrace healthy environmental conditions, the risk of adolescent alcohol use decreases. This tool kit is designed to help your community capitalize on its desire to adopt positive norms and reduce alcohol use by its children.

Gone are the days when individuals are the sole messengers for change. This is a new era, one that empowers entire communities—whether a community is defined as an office, a town or an entire state—to change the social norms by which it operates.

We're asking you to think globally. Ultimately, this will make your job as community change agents easier. As always, we'll be there with you—handing you tools, cheering you on and celebrating your many successes. Let us hear from you as you build a new world within your own communities.