

# The Solution



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## Message From The Chair

There has been a recent increase in discussion and debate about discarding the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) system and privatizing the sale of spirit alcohol. The argument has trumpeted the theme that anything controlled by the government must be bad and that the private sector sale of alcohol would be better for the community. The argument is that making the sale of spirit alcohol available through commercial outlets is more convenient for the public and, that doing so, would increase state revenues.

As a coalition, we have debated this issue ourselves and have taken a position that we oppose privatization. We concluded that, while privatization would increase the availability of alcohol to responsible drinkers, it would also increase the availability to underage drinkers. In addition, privatization may increase the profits of the private sector but it would not necessarily increase state revenue. Now, with ABC control, the state not only gets the taxes on alcohol, it also gets the profits.

We have an obligation in North Carolina to control access to alcohol, especially to minors. The purpose of control is to make liquor available to those adults who choose to drink responsibly--and NOT to promote the sale of liquor. Privatization will only **promote** alcohol consumption through advertizing and it is well-known that advertising is especially effective with youth. Despite some popular myths, adolescent alcohol use is not an acceptable rite of passage; it is a serious threat to adolescent development and health. Privatization would only make alcohol access easier, exacerbating the problem of underage drinking.

The current ABC Board structure allows for community responsibility and places a burden on each community to promote responsible drinking and contain underage drinking. This is what the Mecklenburg ABC Board has consistently done. By statute, it is required that 5% of profits must be dedicated to law enforcement and 7% to alcohol education—per each local ABC Board throughout the state. That commitment to the community would disappear under privatization. There is no way that private enterprise would contribute that amount of money to the community. And North Carolina, especially under current economic conditions, would not likely make up the difference. This would negatively impact substance abuse service providers and other recipients of ABC Board funding. In addition, there would be a significant negative impact on enforcement efforts--something that needs to be increased, not decreased. There is nothing in the philosophy of privatization that builds that kind of accountability into the sale process.

Do we really want the shelves of every grocery store, drug store or convenience store filled with spirits? As it is, these places tend to allow easy access to beer and wine by underage drinkers. Through our alcohol purchase study efforts, we have reduced the number of establishments selling alcohol without checking for identification from 40% to 20%. What is happening in the rest of the state? Currently the alcohol of choice is beer, but can one really doubt it would remain as such with easier access to spirits? Clearly, shoplifting of alcohol would be significantly easier!

Hawking privatization and the potential increased revenue for the state is simplistic. While a few people may find it easier to buy their vodka at the grocery store, as a community, we lose a major funding source for drug prevention and treatment and increase the availability of alcohol to minors. Is it worth it? We think it is not.

Paul Friday, Ph. D.  
Chairperson



*Join the Solution...*

# April is Alcohol Awareness Month

2011 marks the 25<sup>th</sup> year that the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence has highlighted April as Alcohol Awareness Month. The message of this year's events is "One too many" stressing that even a single alcohol-related event (motor vehicle accident, fetal alcohol syndrome case, death, etc.) is one too many.

In recognition of Alcohol Awareness Month, the Anuvia Prevention & Recovery Center is organizing several community events throughout the month of April. These events are intended to raise awareness about the impact of alcohol use and abuse in our community. Here are a few events taking place in April. For a complete list of Alcohol Awareness Month events, visit [www.Anuvia.org](http://www.Anuvia.org).

## DWI Flags

Did you know that in 2010, there were 4,859 DWI convictions in Mecklenburg County? To raise awareness of this staggering number, three locations throughout the county will display small flags in the ground, with each flag representing 10 DWI convictions. This is a very powerful reminder of how many people still choose to drink and drive and how many lives are being put in danger.

## Book Club Kits

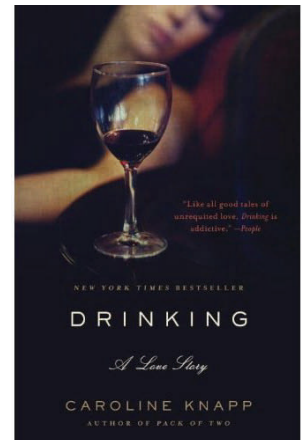
Canvas tote bags containing several alcohol- and recovery-themed books will be available for loan at various locations throughout the county. There will be books for adult readers as well as titles for younger readers and all kits will include discussion guides to encourage dialogue on the issue of alcohol use and recovery. Titles include *Drinking: A Love Story* by Carolina Knapp, *Beautiful Boy* by David Scheff and *Lit* by Mary Karr.

## Alcohol Screening

On April 13<sup>th</sup> alcohol screenings will be conducted on campus at UNC Charlotte, Johnson C. Smith University, Johnson & Wales University, and Queens University. The screening consists of 8 questions used to identify someone that may have issues with alcohol use or dependency. If the screening shows that someone has an issue with alcohol or dependency he or she would be referred to an appropriate professional for a full-scale substance abuse assessment. If the individual is then found to be in need of treatment or recovery services, appropriate resources are provided.

## Underage Drinking Town Hall Meeting

On April 14<sup>th</sup> CMC Mercy will be hosting a town hall meeting to discuss underage drinking. The meeting will provide an opportunity to discuss strategies to prevent underage drinking as well as the impact of alcohol on adolescent development. The event will take place from 6:00 pm to 7:30 pm and dinner will be provided. To register for this event call 704.512.3820.



*Drinking: A Love Story* by Carolina Knapp is included in book club kits.

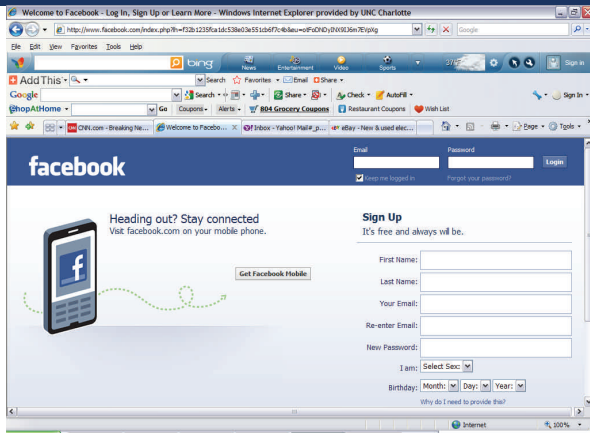
## Did You Know?

- Youth who start drinking before age 15 are 5 times more likely to develop an alcohol abuse problem than those who wait until 21.
- Youth who start drinking before 21 and have a family history of alcohol abuse or alcoholism are at even greater risk for addiction.
- 33% of Mecklenburg County high school students had at least one drink of alcohol on one or more days in the past 30 days.
- 14% of Mecklenburg County high school students reported binge drinking (having 5 or more drinks of alcohol in a row) on one or more days in the past 30 days.

## What's your story?

Do you have any upcoming events or story ideas? Send your event information, pitch ideas, or share some pictures for the next edition of The Solution. Contact Kerry Burch at [kerry.burch@carolinashealthcare.org](mailto:kerry.burch@carolinashealthcare.org)

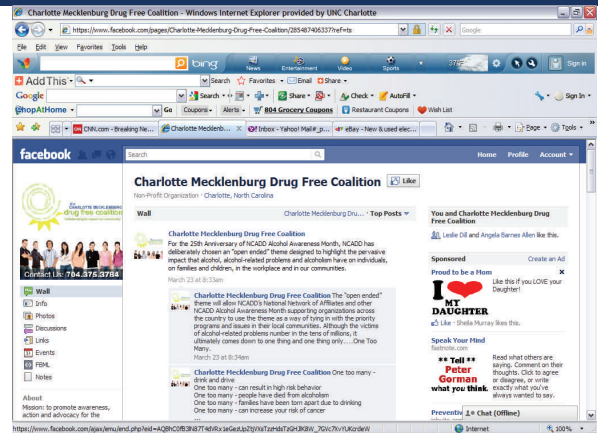
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3. Scroll down and click the green 'Sign Up' button.

**Sign Up**

CONGRATULATIONS! You have officially created your own facebook page! At this point, you can work to make your page your own by following simple instructions that will be provided.



1. To become a friend of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Drug Free Coalition on facebook, simply visit our page by entering "Charlotte Mecklenburg Drug Free Coalition" into the search bar at the top of your homepage.
2. Once you get to the page, you will see a button that says 'Like' with a thumbs up just to the right of where you will see Charlotte Mecklenburg Drug Free Coalition.
3. Click the 'Like' button. You are now our friend and will receive updates on Coalition news and events



## Good News In Latest Alcohol Purchase Study

According to the results of the Coalition's latest Alcohol Purchase Study (APS), fewer stores in Charlotte-Mecklenburg are selling alcohol to young adults without first checking for proper identification.

Dr. Paul Friday, Chairman of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Drug Free Coalition and a member of the Department of Criminal Justice at the UNC Charlotte, has been conducting the alcohol purchase studies since April of 2006. In the studies, students from UNC Charlotte, who are at least 21 but have been judged to look younger, attempt to buy alcohol at stores in Charlotte-Mecklenburg that sell beer and wine. A record is kept of which stores require appropriate proof of age before a sale is made.

According to the latest APS report which was completed in November of last year, the percentage of stores that sell without requiring an I.D. has dropped significantly since the early days of the alcohol purchase studies. In fact, in October of 2006, 41.5% of the stores sold without requiring proper identification. But only 20.8% of the stores sold without an I.D. in November of 2010.

When, during an alcohol purchase study, stores do sell alcohol to a young adult without asking for identification, volunteers from the Air National Guard visit the store to report the incident to managers and encourage them to train their employees to ask for proper identification before making a sale.

"This downward trend in sales gives us confidence that as a community and Coalition we can effect positive change," said Dr. Friday. "The downward trend is a tribute to the efforts of the Coalition members and the National Guard to address the availability of alcohol to underage drinkers. It also speaks highly of the commitment of most businesses to respond to the problem once it has been identified to them."

In the most recent Alcohol Purchase Study 162 Mecklenburg County establishments authorized to sell beer and wine through off-premise permits were randomly selected from the list of locations listed on the Alcoholic Beverage Control (ABC) website ([www.ncabc.com](http://www.ncabc.com)). Purchase attempts were made between October 19 and November, 5, 2010, at 149 locations. Thirteen stores were either out of business, required a membership card for purchase, did not sell beer, or purchasers could not find them.

The establishments most likely to sell without checking for identification continue to be convenience stores that do not sell gas. This has been true for all of the studies. In this study, 47.8% sold without checking. This type of establishment is followed by convenience stores that sell gas which sold without checking 19% of the time. Supermarkets had the lowest rate of sale at 13.3%. All three of the stores approached in zip code 28202 sold without requiring identification. None of the six stores in zip code 28214 did.

# ABC System Protects Communities, Saves State Money

By Dylan Mulrooney-Jones



Dylan Mulrooney-Jones, Chair of the North Carolina Substance Abuse Prevention Providers Association's Policy and Advocacy Committee.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, North Carolina is facing a projected budget shortfall of approximately \$2.4 billion for the upcoming fiscal year. None of us envy the position that our legislature finds itself in. As is the case with household budgets, when a family member loses a job, tough decisions will have to be made. One of the routes that Governor Perdue has declared herself against, and that stacks of public health research support her on, is the privatization of our liquor sales system.

It's easy enough to sit in a room and play with budget numbers by cutting programs and services or selling government run systems. Yet, the public cost is often not fully weighed. Selling our current ABC system (with government run liquor stores and warehouses) has become a target of some legislators and advocacy groups who see it as an easy source of one-time revenue. In so doing, they are not only putting dollars and cents over the safety and well-being of our communities, but are also choosing the easy answer today instead of turning to longer term solutions.

Take underage drinking, for example.

April is Alcohol Awareness Month and across our state and country underage drinking prevention advocates will remind people of what the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration referred to in a recent report as a national crisis. Every year, more than 5,000 young people die from alcohol related injuries. In fact, more youth die from alcohol than from all other illicit drugs combined. But it doesn't stop there.

Youthful alcohol consumption affects the person over his or her life span. As we now know, critical portions of the human brain continue to develop into the mid-20s and drinking before then can do permanent damage to the areas of the brain that govern reasoning, logic, decision-making and memory storage. In addition to the physiological effects, there are the effects of abuse and addiction: those who begin drinking before age 15 are 5 times more likely to have alcohol related problems later in life than youth who wait until 21 to drink.

So what does any of this have to do with the legislature and balancing the budget? Research shows that if the control system were abandoned for the permitting of establishments and the private sale of liquor, our children, our communities and our state's finances would be worse for it.

In the six states surrounding and including North Carolina (three of which are control states and three of which are license states):

- Control states average 7 outlets per 100,000 residents, whereas license states average 44 outlets per 100,000 residents. That is over 6 times as many outlets (per capita) in license states as are in control states.
- Control states average \$140,000 per 100,000 citizens in state liquor revenue compared to an average of only \$52,000 per 100,000 citizens in state liquor revenue for license states.

As alcohol outlet density increases, alcohol availability increases and increased consumption follows. Numerous studies indicate that risk factors such as crime, violence, homicide, HIV/AIDS, alcohol related traffic crashes and underage drinking are associated with higher alcohol outlet density. In particular, neighborhoods of low socio-economic status seem to be magnets for high alcohol outlet density. As specifically suggested in a 2003 study out of Harvard, demand seems to follow supply and not the other way around. Regardless of the demographic or the type of drinking behavior, overall consumption increases as outlet density and overall alcohol availability go up.

Even if you somehow manage to turn a blind eye to the public health crisis of underage drinking and how it tears our families and communities apart, with underage drinking costing our state \$1.4 billion annually, we simply can't afford an increase in teenage alcohol use. With our current system in place, North Carolina ranks 48<sup>th</sup> among the 50 states in consumption per gallon and 5<sup>th</sup> in revenue per gallon—if there is a business model that better represents the public health and state budget I haven't seen it.

Alcohol control might not “feel modern,” nor is it always convenient, but the evidence is clear: it is saving lives and futures and protecting our next generation of leaders. In tough economic times, priorities are often difficult to identify. But fewer outlets, less underage drinking, less crime and violence and more long term revenue should be an easy priority, and it all starts with alcohol control.