



MICAP RECAP

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Dear Friends and Colleagues,

A verse from First Corinthians (3:16) in our Holy Bible provides opportunity to share some things about how we use (or abuse) our bodies as well as MICAP's Mission Statement. The verse reads:

"Do you not know that you are God's temple, And that God's Spirit dwells in you?"

Because our Holy Book begins with such a lofty message about being created in God's image; and because it goes on to tell about how wonderful God is who made the whole creation, MICAP aligns itself with the historic church when it affirms the wonder of God in creation. And when the world is created with such wonder, it is difficult to name anything unclean. Peter's experience recorded in the Book of Acts adds momentum to this assumption. ("What God has made clean, you (WE) must not call profane(10:15b).") My favorite Psalm (Ps. 8) not only testifies to the Wonder of God who created it all, but also to the high place in the creation which God has accorded humankind. Small wonder that Paul reminds us that we are God's Temple and that God's Spirit dwells within us.

MICAP has gone to great lengths to emphasize that it was the Temperance Movement which is the foundation of present day MICAP. Our first issue of the Re-newed MICAP-RECAP in 2004 was a monogram entitled: "Whatever Happened to the Temperance Movement?" * That traced the history of MICAP and other organizations which "held forth" after the Prohibition Amendment was rejected. It concluded: "The Temperance Movement is alive and well, with the Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems celebrating 100 years of service in 2005."

But "USE" and "ABUSE" are two different things! And MICAP is careful to lay out that it is the ABUSE of alcohol, tobacco, other drugs, and gambling which are most problematic in our lives and in our society. Further, if our bodies are really the Temple of God and God's Spirit dwells in us, then we do damage to God's Temple (as well as ourselves) when we participate in "at risk" behaviors and overuse (abuse) the aforementioned products.

But we also recognize that there is a lot of help out there these days from manufacturers of beverage alcohol, tobacco companies, and others who would encourage us to "abuse" ourselves with the aforementioned products. MICAP keeps on top of that by working with and encouraging the Michigan Liquor Control Commission to keep controls tight, by keeping abreast of and encouraging legislation to carefully regulate the sale and use of such products, and maintain the vital lines of responsibility in our families and in our society.

We will continue to lift up these issues and encourage our member-ship to temperance in all aspects of our lives. The rest of this issue is devoted to items telling you what MICAP and others are doing in these arenas.

Faithfully Yours,

Rev. W. J. (Bill) Amundsen, Chairperson
AADIF/MICAP Board of Director

*Some copies of this available. Call 517.484.0016 for a copy. There is no cost.

MICAP STANDS BY ITS HISTORIC POSITION

The Legal Drinking Age Should Be 21!

History was written in 1984 when MICAP lead the fight to return the legal drinking age to 21 in Michigan. After the initial moves to lower the drinking age in many states of our country, Michigan was the first state to raise it back to 21. Since then all states have set Age-21 as the legal drinking age, partly spurred on by the National Minimum Purchase Act adopted by Congress in 1984 which penalized states with a loss of federal Highway Funds if they didn't adopt Age-21 as the legal drinking age.¹

Since then, there have been a host of persons and/or groups pushing to lower the legal drinking age to something less than Age-21. The most recent push comes from John McCardell, former President of Middlebury College who has founded a group called "Choose Responsibility."²

While some of these persons or groups are well-intentioned, others have personal gain at stake in their position(s). What follows here is a report on the data which indicates that Age-21 is a good law and any changes to a lesser age will invite serious consequences.

The benefits of raising the legal age for drinking to 21 became apparent almost immediately. 1987 data on accidents and driving indicate that an estimated 1,071 lives were saved as a result of the raise in the legal drinking age. Further, from 1975 through 1996, the estimated number of lives saved through fewer fatalities, in auto accidents alone, reached nearly 17,000.³

There is other ample evidence suggesting that Age-21 is the better legal drinking age. During the 1970s and early 1980s (before Age-21 swept the country) when many states lowered the legal drinking age to 20, 19, or 18, there was an 11% average increase in fatalities in 18 to 20 year-old age group in the 48 contiguous states in our nation.⁴ During that same period, Arizona reported that fatal accidents increased over 25% while the numbers of deaths increased over 35%.⁵ A Michigan study found that crashes involving persons who "had been drinking" increased 35%. "Driving while intoxicated (DWI)" arrests increased 141% during the period the lowered drinking age went from 21 to 18 before being raised again to 21.⁶ The data is in! The Age-21 Law has saved both lives and dollars in just highway and traffic incidents alone.

But there are other considerations. Raising the legal drinking age to 21 became a deterrent to abuse of beverage alcohol. High School seniors in states where the legal drinking age was 21 drank less before their 21st birthdays than did seniors in states that had lowered the legal drinking age. They also drank less

between the ages of 21 – 25 than did those in states with the lower legal drinking age.⁷

Another national survey of 16 to 21 year olds found that teens from states with the higher (Age-21) legal drinking age drank less frequently. In addition, The 1978 Study of Adolescent Drinking Behavior found that 10th to 12th graders (16 to 18 year olds) in states with the lower legal drinking age drank significantly more, were less likely to abstain from alcohol, and were drunk more often than students in those states where the legal drinking age was 21.¹ I call this the "elevator effect" because limits raised by the legal drinking Age-21 Act caused less drinking for both underage drinkers and those drinking legally as well.

Another facet of the "elevator effect" happens when young persons (ages 15 – 17) imitate the practices of their (slightly) older peers. In those places where the legal drinking age was lowered from 21 to 19 or 18, the 15 – 17 group drank more. Conversely, when the Legal Drinking Age was raised to Age-21, the 15 – 17 year old group drank less.⁸

A New York College Study documented that students who began drinking at younger ages were more likely to drink heavily in college, and more likely to report alcohol-related problems such as trouble at work or with friends, family, and police.⁹

The above paragraph illustrates a well-known fact that the earlier individuals begin drinking the greater the percentage of those individuals who will experience alcohol-related problems in their lives. This can take the form of full-blown alcoholism, absenteeism from work, injury from alcohol-related accidents, and/or dysfunctional relationships with parents, spouses, children, friends, and/or employers.

Another whole arena in the literature of Alcohol Studies is that of human growth and development. Studies have shown that the human brain undergoes phenomenal changes in our teen and early adult years. Alcohol-related studies of those same years indicate that "abuse" of beverage alcohol thwarts the natural changes that help us grow and mature. Abuse of beverage alcohol during those formative years may lead to cognitive and/or emotional impairment of one sort or another for longer or shorter periods, even throughout our lifetimes.

Finally, because the use of beverage alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana are seen as "gateways" to illicit drug use, raising the legal drinking age to 21 pushed that farther into the future for many persons.¹⁰ The extra three years gave many of the time to mature enough

to resist the temptation to enter the worlds of other so-called risky behaviors.

Again, the data is in! The changes which raised the drinking age to 21 in Michigan in 1984, and propelled the nation to move to Age-21 in 1986 were beneficial changes. There are still problems associated with the abuse of beverage alcohol. We still have traffic accidents and fatalities associated with drinking and driving. We have other health problems also which are caused by the abuse of beverage alcohol. But lowering the drinking age to something less than Age-21 will not reduce the problems alluded to above. Indeed, it will make them worse. MICAP stands with its original premise: "Age-21 is better than any lower age!"

John Hall was Chairman of the National Transportation Safety Board a few years ago. In that capacity, and after a barrage of persons had pushed again for a legal drinking age of less than 21, he said: "State Age-21 Laws are one of the most effective public policies ever implemented in the nation...I am chagrined to report that some supposedly responsible officials would like to repeal them."³

As I pen this to send to you, our MICAP constituents, I echo that sentiment. The data is in! Lives have been saved. Our streets and roads are safer. People's lives are healthier, and their families more wholesome. So whenever people talk to you about lowering the legal drinking age and tell you "We've tried that long enough," just remember that these are real stats.

And then call your friends and neighbors and tell them what a good thing it was that Michigan lead the nation in bringing a National Legal Drinking Age-21 to beverage alcohol.

Citations:

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3. National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, "1995 Youth Fatal Crash and Alcohol Facts," February, 1997.
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5. Arizona Department of Public Safety, "An Impact Assessment of Arizona's Lowered Legal Drinking Age and a Review of Previous Research," Statistical Center, 1981.
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9. Barnes, G. M., et al., "Alcohol Misuse among College Students and Other Young Adults: Findings from a General Population Study of New York State," The International Journal of Addictions, 27(8); 917-934, 1992.
10. National Center on Addictions and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, "Cigarettes, Alcohol, and Marijuana: Gateways to Illicit Drug Use," p. 31, Oct. 1994.

HARVARD STUDY CONFIRMS TOBACCO COMPANIES INCREASED NICOTINE LEVELS IN CIGARETTES (and) HIGHLIGHTS NEED FOR FDA REGULATION OF TOBACCO

"Statement of Matthew L. Myers, President, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids"

<http://www.tobaccofreekids.org/Script/DisplayPressRelease.php3?Display=962tobaccofreekids.org>

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Washington, DC – A new study released today by the Harvard School of Public Health shows the critical need for Congress to enact legislation granting the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) authority over tobacco products. The Harvard study expands on and confirms an August 2006 study released by the Massachusetts Department of Public health that found that tobacco companies have deliberately increased

the levels of nicotine in cigarette smoke since 1998. The FDA legislation would require tobacco companies to disclose to the FDA changes in their products and provide FDA the authority to require them to reduce levels of constituents, like nicotine that make them more harmful and/or more addictive.

Manufacturers of food, drugs, and even pet foods are required to disclose to the FDA and the public changes in their products in order to protect the public health. Only the tobacco industry is exempt from these basic public health protections. These studies demonstrate that what the tobacco industry knows and what consumers don't, can kill us.

Both the Harvard and Massachusetts Department of Public Health studies found that nicotine levels in the three cigarette brands that are most popular among youth smokers (Marlboro, Newport, and Camel) have increased significantly. According to the Mass. Study, nicotine levels in R. J. Reynolds' menthol Kool brand increased by 20 percent during the interim 1998 - 2004. The Harvard study uses sophisticated methods of analysis and also includes data from 1997 and 2005, demonstrating conclusively that there is a clear upward trend in the levels of nicotine found in Marlboro.

These studies add to the growing evidence that as smoking rates continue to decline, and more smokers try to quit, tobacco companies are actively trying to maintain addiction among smokers and addict a new generation of replacement smokers. The fact that the tobacco companies have been able to secretly increase nicotine levels in tobacco smoke occurred only because no federal or state agency currently has regu-

latory authority over cigarettes or what tobacco companies put in cigarettes.

Legislation to allow the FDA to regulate tobacco should be given a high priority and scheduled for action early this year. The proposed legislation would grant the FDA the authority and resources to stop harmful tobacco company practices that continue to addict children, mislead consumers and devastate the nation's health. The FDA would have authority to restrict tobacco advertising and promotions, especially to children; stop illegal sales of tobacco products to children; ban candy-flavored cigarettes, which clearly are starter products for young new smokers; prohibit health claims about so-called "reduced risk" products that are not scientifically proven or that would discourage current tobacco users from quitting OR encourage new users to start; require larger and more informative health warnings on tobacco products; and prohibit terms such as "light," "mild," and "low-tar" that have misled consumers into believing that certain cigarettes are safer than others. Enacting this legislation would be a truly historic step in protecting the nation's health

EDITOR'S NOTE: This legislation is before a Legislative Committee as this is written. If it has not passed by the time you receive this, please call, write, or e-mail our Senators and your National Representative, and request their support.

KUDOS TO REV. ROBERT KERSTEN And WE NEED YOUR HELP!

Bob Kersten, Retired Pastor in the United Methodist tradition and MICAP Treasurer and Board Member attended a Lansing Lugnuts ballgame at Oldsmobile Park on Thursday, June 21, 2007. That was a special day. The Lugnuts called it "Thirsty Thursday." And beer was being sold at half-price during both games of a double-header.

At the game, two young boys were sitting behind the "home plate" area. When asked: "If a ball came near us, would you go over a chair to get it?" they responded: "No, we've been drinking beer!" Bob said: "They were definitely under-aged!"

Their response prompted Bob to call the Liquor Control Commission (LCC) to report the incident. He also reported that no one was checking IDs anywhere in Oldsmobile Park, as far as he could see. Vendors were serving almost anyone who asked.

When Bob returned to Oldsmobile Park a couple weeks later, there was a change. Ballpark personnel were asking for IDs at the gates and were banding legal-age persons with yellow bands so vendors would know who to serve and who not to serve. Another per-

son who works at Oldsmobile Park indicated to Bob that several persons were also evicted from the Park recently because they were trying to get beer under pretense of being of age. She indicated that had not happened in quite a while.

Did Bob's call to the LCC make a difference? We can't say with certainty. We don't know why the ID strategy was changed, or why some persons were evicted. But we believe that Bob's call to the Michigan Liquor Control Commission has made a DIFFERENCE. Congratulations, Bob..., and THANKS!

Do you have to be a member of the MICAP Board of Directors to make a call to the Liquor Control Commission about underage drinking or other infringements of our State of Michigan Alcohol Policies? NO! Anyone can make that call, or do it in writing, or via the internet. Their contacts are as follows: Toll Free Hotline Number is 1-866-893-2121; Web-Site: www.michigan.gov/dleg - Liquor Control.; USPS: The Michigan Liquor Control Commission, 7150 Harris Drive, P.O. Box 320005, Lansing, Michigan 48909.

Thanks for your help ahead of time!