



# MICAP RECAP

March 15, 2005

## Has MSU solved the problem of binge drinking?

**EXCESSIVE DRINKING . . .** is the greatest threat to Michigan State University's 44,000 students, according to Lansing Medical Director Dr. Dean Sienko.

The good news is that MSU officials believe they have finally solved the problem.

At their February 10 board meeting, MSU trustees decided to join the rest of the schools in the Big 10 by banning open containers of alcohol on campus.

The same day as trustees took their action, MSU announced in *The State News* that it had successfully solved the problem of excessive drinking, announcing that nearly two-thirds of the students were no longer binge drinking.

The bad news is that in spite of all the rhetoric, nothing has really changed.

Although open containers of alcohol are banned, the board agreed to make exceptions to the new rule. The first exception will be for tailgating at home football games, but there will be other exceptions, perhaps for alumni gatherings or fund-raisers. And when the new luxury suites are opened next fall at Spartan Stadium, chances are the high rollers will be able to have their alcoholic beverage of choice served to them. It is unlikely, though, that students will be allowed to imbibe in the general seating areas.

Those who are not a part of the Spartan alcohol culture will find this reasoning difficult to understand, as they recall that most of the problems with excessive drinking happened at tailgate parties.

Since the riots of 1998 and 1999, MSU has maintained a prevention program known as social norms. The theory is that most students overestimate how much alcohol their peers consume,

**What Do Spartans Do?**

**Most Spartans\*:**

- Listen to music to manage stress (97%)
- Stay with the same group of friends the entire time when they go out drinking (78%)
- Play recreational sports (57%)
- Study at least 4 evenings per week (77%)
- Consume 5 or fewer drinks when they party (63%)
- Work for wages during the academic year (61%)

\* MSU Spring Celebration Survey, 2004; MSU SALGA Survey, 2003; NCHA Survey, 2004

**Celebrate STATE**

so if they know how much others are really drinking, the result will be that they will cut back personally.

The ad shown here establishes MSU's social norm as "5 or fewer drinks." The problem is that binge drinking is defined as "5 or more drinks," a standard established by Harvard University's School of Public Health.

The message, as most students will understand it, is that 5 drinks are the social norm for MSU and if you consume 5 beers, you will still avoid the problems that come from binge drinking.

Unfortunately, altering the definition of excessive alcohol consumption will not do away with the consequences of overindulgence, no matter how sincere MSU officials may be.

Five drinks is only part of the problem. Beer is the alcoholic beverage of choice for most college students who drink and the accepted definition for a standard drink of beer is 12 oz.

The trend among East Lansing bars these days, however, is toward super-sizing drinks. Adjacent to the social norms ad that appeared in the February 10 *State News* was an ad for Maggy's Sports Grill, featuring 22 oz. drafts of Labatt beer. This Canadian brew has become a student favorite since Labatt became a sponsor of MSU football and basketball broadcasts.

There's no such thing as truth in advertising when it comes to beer, and for these super-sized drafts, drinkers should be warned of the difference from a standard drink of beer:


- ▶ Maggy's 22 oz. specials are equivalent in alcohol content to 1.83 standard drinks.
- ▶ Harrison Roadhouse's 25 oz. specials are equivalent in alcohol content to 2.08 standard drinks.
- ▶ Paul Revere's 34 oz. specials are equivalent in alcohol content to 2.83 standard drinks.

Are bars that offer super-size specials aware that their customers are likely to overindulge? It would appear that at Paul Revere's such behavior is not uncommon. Last call is at 2 a.m. and not to worry, East Lansing's oldest bar provides free rides to get students back to the dorm safely.

The Conversion Table indicates the blood alcohol level for a 170-pound male consuming 5 standard drinks and 5 super-sized drinks of 22 oz., 25 oz., and 34 oz., along with the blood alcohol level for those consuming this amount after waiting 2 hours to drive home.

MAGGY'S

## MUGGER'S NIGHT!



30c Wings • 30c Wings • 30c Wings

**\$1.25 22oz Beers**

**\$1.75 Labatt/Light (22oz)**



337-0200

**ALL YOU CAN EAT FISH FRY!**

**EVERY FRIDAY**

**\$8.95**

★ New Happy Hour Prices! ★

ROADHOUSE PUB

NEW BIG MUGS

HAPPY HOUR! \$2.25 25oz.

351-6868

# REVERE'S

**Free ride home**

last call 2 am

East Lansing's oldest bar

EST. 1948

## \$2.50 34oz BEERS

Thursdays  
& Sundays

**Serving Food!**

332-6960  
2703 E. Grand River

## MSU must change tactics on booze

### Tailgate exception, social norm effort won't end problem

Tailgating was out of control at Michigan State University during the 2004 football season. Twenty people went to hospital emergency

rooms with life-threatening blood alcohol levels above 0.30 after the MSU-Notre Dame game.

Dr. Dean Sienko, Ingham County medical director, called excessive drinking the greatest threat to MSU's 44,000 students.

The university's trustees responded recently by banning open containers of alcohol on campus. But they held out a possible exception for tailgating, which was at the heart of the problem.

Trustees also left the door open for exceptions for alumni gatherings, fund-raising events and for the first time to allow alcohol in Spartan Stadium this fall when the new luxury boxes open.

Officials said their open-con-

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Los Angeles Times Syndicate

tainer ban demonstrates that MSU takes alcohol use seriously. A more effective way to make that point would be to join the 227 schools that have pledged to ban alcohol advertising from their sporting events.

The Alcohol-Free Sports TV campaign was launched by the Center for Science in the Public Interest, a Washington-based health advocacy group. It noted in a nationwide poll that 73 percent of adults said it is wrong for colleges to take money from alcohol advertisers while at the same time trying to discourage underage drinking and binge drinking among their students.

Current sponsors of MSU football and basketball broadcasts include Labatt beer and Smirnoff Ice, a low-alcohol,

sweet-tasting alcoholic drink criticized by the American Medical Association as appealing to underage drinkers.

Signing up with the Alcohol-Free Sports TV campaign would not eliminate drinking problems on campus. But it would send a strong statement that MSU wants to break the alcohol-sports link that has been a part of so many of the school's problems.

Since the alcohol-fueled riots of 1999, MSU has used an educational program called social norms, which operates on the theory that most kids overestimate how much alcohol their peers consume. When surveys show there isn't as much irresponsible drinking as they thought, the expectation is that

kids will cut back on their own drinking.

This hasn't helped with MSU's problems of excessive drinking, and with national binge drinking rates remaining at 44 percent for the past decade, researchers have questioned the value of social norms elsewhere.

Rather than social norms, kids need to learn science-based objective standards. For example, when Warren Air Force Base was faced with alcohol problems not unlike those on the college campus, they adopted a standard of 0-0-1-3 for safe drinking.

The numbers stand for four limits on alcohol: zero underage drinking; zero drunken driving arrests; and one drink an hour, up to three per night for those who do imbibe.

The campaign is working. In the final three months of 2004, public drunkenness, driving violations, domestic violence and sexual assault declined 74 percent from the first of the year. And the base reported 81 percent fewer cases of underage drinking since the first of the year.

Adopting an educational program like 0-0-1-3 would make more sense than MSU's present social norms approach.

## Conversion Table

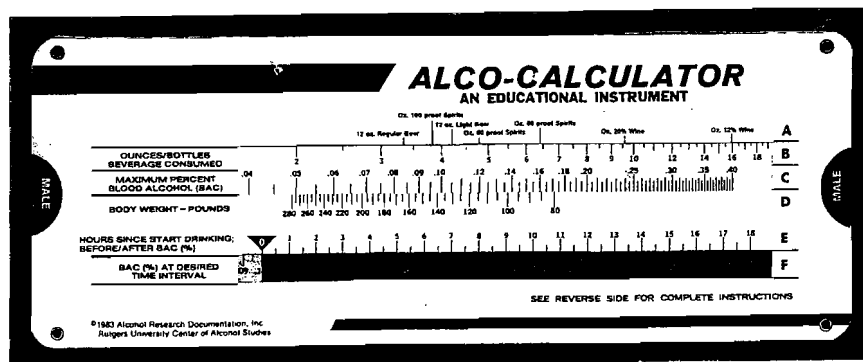
- ▶ A standard drink of beer is 12 oz.
- ▶ A 22 oz. mug of beer would equal the alcohol content of 1.83 standard drinks.
- ▶ A 25 oz. mug of beer would equal the alcohol content of 2.08 standard drinks.
- ▶ A 34 oz. mug of beer would equal the alcohol content of 2.83 standard drinks.

For a 170-pound male consuming regular beer, following are the blood alcohol levels for "5 drinks":

Size of Beer	Peak Blood Alcohol	After 2 hours
12 oz.	0.12%	0.09%
22 oz.	0.21%	0.18%
25 oz.	0.24%	0.21%
34 oz.	0.34%	0.31%

The body can metabolize approximately 0.015 ounces of alcohol per hour. These calculations do not allow for factors such as food in the stomach, but other conditions would not drastically alter the calculations shown here.

These figures were computed by the ALCO-CALCULATOR, an educational instrument created by Alcohol Research Documentation, Inc. of the Rutgers University Center of Alcohol Studies.





**ALCOHOL'S POPULARITY . . .** as the beverage of choice for most Americans is vastly over-rated, in spite of what the industry's annual \$2 billion advertising would suggest.

A solid third of the U.S. population are total abstainers, never drinking beer, wine or liquor on any occasion and current drinkers, defined as those who have consumed any alcohol within the

30-day period prior to being surveyed, amount to barely half of America's adult population.

Simmons Research recently surveyed American adults to determine their most popular choices among alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages and the results, published in the trade magazine *Advertising Age*, may surprise you.

**TOP 10 BEVERAGES FOR WOMEN**

1 Orange Juice	71%
2 Bottled spring water	65%
3 Other soda	61%
4 Regular cola	61%
5 Instant hot-cocoa mix	55%
6 Coffee (regular)	48%
7 Iced tea (ready to drink)	45%
8 Low-fat milk	45%
9 Diet or sugar-free colas	42%
10 Domestic table wines	35%

**TOP 10 BEVERAGES FOR MEN**

1 Regular cola	71%
2 Orange juice	70%
3 Other soda	67%
4 Bottled spring water	56%
5 Instant hot-cocoa mix	52%
6 Coffee (regular)	48%
7 Activity drinks	46%
8 Low-fat milk	44%
9 Iced tea (ready to drink)	44%
10 Regular domestic beer	38%

**MISSION STATEMENT**

*The Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems seeks to:*

1. Broaden the awareness of the religious community, public officials and the Michigan Public to the destructive consequences of alcohol, other drugs, tobacco and gambling, and offer positive solutions.
2. Educate the Michigan Public for responsible controls in the areas of alcohol, other drugs, tobacco and gambling, and
3. Alert and mobilize supporters to any public policy changes related to MICAP's mission.