



MICAP RECAP

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*Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems
Celebrating its 114th Anniversary in 2019*

MICAP: THEN and NOW

**by Rev. W. J. (Bill) Amundsen, Retired
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Since its inception in 1904, the Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems (MICAP) has worked tirelessly to educate Michigan citizens about the consequences of the use and abuse of alcohol and other impairing drugs. For more than a century, MICAP has promoted and advocated for smart and effective policy regarding the sale of beverage alcohol (B/A) in Michigan. Through the publication of this newsletter, we have educated and engaged our readers and supporters in these legislative priorities, building a legacy that has played a role in several policy milestones.

MICAP urged the adoption of the Quota Law, which limits the number of licensed establishments in any geographic area to 1 per 1,500 population. Without this statute in place, the number of alcohol licensees could sky-rocket, and a town or community may be inundated with licensees (bars, and carry-out establishments, etc.). In addition, we advocated for the 500-foot law, which denies liquor licenses for any request within 500 feet of churches and schools. Our organization was also instrumental in squelching legislation that would have absolved licensees from liability when serving drunk bar patrons, and today all licensees must comply with the state's Mandatory Server Training Requirements.

We moved and carried out a grass-roots campaign to return the legal drinking age to 21 following a spate of highway accidents and fatalities when the legal drinking age was lowered inappropriately to age 18. The National Highway Traffic Safety Board picked up on the drastic reduction in accidents and fatalities when the legal age returned to 21 in Michigan, and subsequent legislation mandated that any state wanting full federal highway funding must return their legal drinking age to age 21. All 50 states have since returned to this benchmark.

Michigan's drunk driving laws were first established in 1960, and MICAP advocated to tighten the original intoxication levels, first from 0.15 to 0.10 BAC, and then from 0.10 to 0.08 BAC. Michigan was only one of seven states with an existing .08 BAC when it became the national standard for driving while intoxicated as a part of the U.S. Department of Transportation Appropriations Act. MICAP helped establish the state office of Substance Abuse in 1974.

In 2010, the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) rescinded the approval of Alcoholic Energy Drinks because of their danger, especially to under-aged drinkers. MICAP and other organizations helped raise widespread community concerns following a national news event on the west

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coast where five college students were narrowly saved from alcohol poisoning from alcohol energy drinks by the National Guard. The MLCC met in emergency session and mandated the de-listing of all alcoholic energy drinks above the alcohol content of normal beer.

It is important to celebrate our history and the progress that has been made to mitigate the negative impacts of alcohol and other drugs on individuals, families and communities. Almost every milestone that has been reached in recent history remains under threat of new legislation aimed at loosening restrictions on licensees and bolstering the alcohol lobby in Michigan. Earlier this year, The Michigan Council on Alcohol Problems (MICAP) embarked on a goal-setting process to help move us into the future and to keep faith with our constituents and our mission to protect and expand on the common sense policies we have worked to secure. What follows is a list of the MICAP goals, ranked by our Board of Directors, and fully adopted in August 2019.

1. **Educate the public, Michigan legislators, and the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) on the need for legislation which will move Michigan toward a 0.05 BAC policy.** While the State of Michigan has adopted a 0.08 Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC), accident data continues to remind us that persons should not be driving with a BAC greater than 0.05 BAC.
2. **To educate the public and impel state legislators and the MLCC to adopt a tax on B/A of 10 cents per drink (beer, wine, and/or mixed drinks) to mitigate their problems.** The cost to each man, woman, and child in Michigan is over \$900.00 per year from the fallout from the abuse of Beverage Alcohol (B/A), and includes such things as accidents, illness, family abuse, workplace costs, courts and incarcerations. This income could help to fund programs that will help persons and families through rehabilitation and recovery.
3. **Increase funding and board membership for the agency.** MICAP is seeking to develop, diversify and expand its Board of Directors to create a broader representation of the Michigan citizenry concerned about alcohol abuse, prevention and education.

4. **To continue to lobby against all efforts to extend alcohol sales hours past the current 2:00 AM closure and prior to the 7:00 AM opening of licensees.** The liquor and hospitality industries continue to push toward 24-hour sales. MICAP has turned back their attempts to increase sales hours from 2 AM to 4 AM at least three times in the last 15 years.
5. **To have a consistent presence at all MLCC semi-annual meetings to share our commitment to sound alcohol policy for the public good, rather than what serves the interests of the alcohol lobby and retailers.** The MLCC has public hearings in the spring and fall of each year that have vital influence on the policies that the MLCC puts forth. We have testified occasionally at these hearings, yet the resulting actions are largely driven by the liquor and hospitality industries. This goal renews our commitment to ensure equal representation at these meetings.
6. **To urge the Michigan State Police to embellish their Accident Report Form UD10 to include: a) The source of the alcohol which contributed to the accident, and b) in the case of death in the accident, whether the deceased was the victim or the cause of the death of another.** There is an overall lack of data from alcohol-related highway accidents involving persons who have been involved in accidents when B/A is also involved.
7. **To discover better ways to have a greater presence in local churches and denominational conferences.** Support of MICAP by the churches of Michigan has diminished over the years. One reason has been the widespread acceptance of B/A in society. Another reason is the circulation of **false** claims that B/A (wine especially) is good for you in moderation.

While MICAP has done good work during these past 115 years, we on the Board of Directors also believe that the best years and best work still lie ahead of us. Therefore, we have adopted these 7 priorities to guide our work in the year ahead and beyond. We hope that you will agree with this assessment and continue to support MICAP along our shared journey. Thank you for your consideration of these ideas and your support.

Here's to Safe Celebrations for the Holiday Season!

By Pamela Erickson

The holidays are a great time of year to celebrate with family and friends—and even better without the regrets of having overdone it the night before. Luckily, there are a lot of alternatives now to higher potency beverages and more acceptance around drinking less, or not at all. More people—especially the young—are looking for healthier lifestyles. So here are some ideas for enjoying a safe and happy holiday season.

This is a good time to try low- and non-alcoholic beverages.

As this market sector grows, more and more new high-quality products are added to bars and store shelves. According to one expert, “Low-alcohol beverages is one of the emerging trends in the global alcohol drinks market...as consumers are currently opting for a healthier lifestyle...” As a host, you can provide guests with options that go beyond drinking cocktail mixers without alcohol. You might take the time to inform your guests about these products, since many may not have tried them. You also might consider taking some to parties to share with other guests. And, when going out, ask your server about low- and non-alcoholic options. This will let them know there is a market for such options—you might even get a recommendation for something new from a savvy bartender.

If you consume alcohol, monitoring your drinks will help you stay within moderate guidelines.

There is an excellent government website that can help you maintain a moderate lifestyle. It answers questions such as “How much is too much?” (<https://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/How-much-is-too-much/>). This website will help you monitor your drinking by suggesting you keep count of “standard drinks” consumed. But this may not be easy since there is such a wide range of alcohol content in drinks. A “standard drink” contains 0.6 ounces of ethanol which equals 12 ounces of 5% ABV beer, 5 ounces of 12% ABV wine or 1.5 ounces of 40% ABV spirits. However, the drinks you order are often more than this standard. Beer may be served in 16-ounce pint glasses and can have an alcohol content of 4% for a stout or 7.5%

for a stronger IPA. The wine you order may vary widely from a 5% ABV Moscato to a Zinfandel at 16%. Or, the 12% wine may be over-poured so you are really drinking one-and-a-half to two standard drinks. If you order a standard shot of a 40% alcohol spirit drink, 1.5 ounces is a standard drink. But, some specialty drinks have multiple shots, so you may be drinking two or three standard drinks in one glass.

Remember that drinking and driving can be a dangerous proposition.

It may be difficult to measure impairment which is usually assumed to be at a .08 Blood Alcohol Content level. The BAC you reach varies with many factors such as how much you weigh, whether you have an empty stomach and whether you are male or female. The safest alternative is not to drink and drive. Instead, consider a taxi, ride-share or a non-drinking friend.

If you have over-indulged, a short period of abstinence may be able to reset your relationship with alcohol.

In Britain, the “Dry January” program expects over 4 million to participate. There is even a Dry January app that shows how much money and calories can be saved by not imbibing. And more bars are putting an emphasis on house-made sodas and fresh juices that can be consumed without alcohol. Research from the University of Sussex found that participation in Dry January led to less drinking, even months later. This was even true for people who didn’t last the whole month.

Enjoy socializing! It's important to take a break from screens and engage with more humans!

Sources:

<https://alcoholchange.org.uk/get-involved/campaigns/dry-january> <https://www.rethinkingdrinking.niaaa.nih.gov/tools/Calculators/drink-size-calculator.aspx>
<https://www.reportlinker.com/p04877165/Global-Low-Alcohol-Beverages-Market.html>
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/broadcast/read/27612>

For more information, see www.healthyalcoholmarket.com

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Please consider making a year-end gift to MICAP

One of the reasons I give to church is because I cannot be in mission all over the world. But at the end of the year, when I have contributed faithfully, I know that some of my support has gone to all continents in the world, every state in the United States, and to projects here in Michigan and locally.

The same is true of my giving to MICAP. At the end of the year, when I have contributed faithfully, I know that I have helped prevent “round-the-clock beverage/alcohol sales,” contributed to prevention of under-aged drinking, helped keep a Beverage Alcohol license from being issued within 500 feet of a school, and spoken to legislators to let them know that a GOOD Public Policy regarding Beverage Alcohol is a lot better than just any policy which is good for the Hospitality and Liquor industries.

I hope you’ll join me in supporting MICAP strongly in the year ahead. You’ll be glad you did.

Rev. Bill Amundsen, Board Member and Treasurer, MICAP