

The Extra Mile

Advocating for evidence-based policies and practices
to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms



Miles to Go: LCC Unmoved

Community speaks out against LCC's weak penalty



George Gervase

On July 9, 2019 -- nearly nine months after 17-year-old George Gervase of Elkhorn died in an alcohol-impaired traffic crash -- Kwik Shop 665 at 156th and Blondo Streets in Omaha was awaiting the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission's (LCC) verdict. The business had already plead guilty in June for selling alcohol to minors that would lead to the death of George Gervase on October 12, 2018, but were forced to attend the July hearings to face the LCC and explain themselves. The LCC could suspend, cancel or revoke its license.

The verdict: 5 days of suspension that could be paid off as a \$250 fine.

It would appear that Kwik Shop, while admitting its guilt and having been found to have sold on multiple occasions to the teens identified during an Omaha Police Department investigation (confirmed by the store's security camera footage), was able to convince the LCC that little could have been done to prevent these illegal sales by a "rogue employee," who was sentenced to one year in prison with probation after pleading no contest.

Many in the community could not stand by following that decision. Citizens and organizations across the state signed a letter calling on the LCC to reconsider its decision, arguing that by giving the minimum penalty in this tragic case the LCC is sending the wrong message to the business community about the

consequences of selling alcohol to minors.

Even in the tragic case of a death resulting from sales to minors, you could be eligible for only a \$250 fine and continue business as usual -- as if nothing had happened.

Many were also shocked to learn that days of suspension could actually be paid off as a fine -- they assumed suspension meant not being able to sell alcohol -- without exceptions.

The fact is that businesses **are** responsible for the actions of their employees, which is why Kwik Shop plead guilty to begin with. It was incumbent upon the LCC to deliver a penalty that fit the crime and circumstances of the case. They failed to do so.

Nevertheless, the penalty guidelines that the LCC use when considering violations of the Liquor Control Act are currently under review. Organizations and individuals have the ability to weigh in with the LCC to call for harsher penalties for certain violations that have great potential for harm, including sales to minors.

The next meeting of the LCC is set for Tuesday, September 17th at 9 a.m.

MILES TO GO II: "Act #GretnaStrong"

The work to hold those responsible for harm continues

Omaha metro area law enforcement officers conducted [alcohol compliance checks](#) on August 9-10, less than two months following the tragedy in Gretna in which four teenage girls lost their lives in an alcohol-impaired traffic crash.

Eight out of 227 businesses sold alcohol to minors during those checks -- that's eight too many. Simply put, these checks are conducted in order to ensure that businesses are following the law, and they are not difficult to pass. Keeping alcohol out of the hands of youth is critically important to prevent alcohol-related harms in our communities.

Yet in the wake of this tragedy, these failures point to how deep and pervasive the problem of underage drinking is in Nebraska, despite the [national and state reductions in rates of the problem](#).

Another challenge has been [the roadblocks that Sarpy County investigators have encountered](#) while trying to identify the source of the alcohol that led to the teenage girls' deaths. Despite a reward of \$14,000 for information leading to an arrest [meaningful information that could lead to an arrest has not been provided to authorities](#). [In the words of Tonja Minardi, mother of crash victim Alex Minardi:](#) "It's one thing to say you are Gretna Strong but it's another thing to act Gretna Strong."



To submit an anonymous tip, call Sarpy County Crime Stoppers at **402-592-7867**, or submit a tip [here](#).

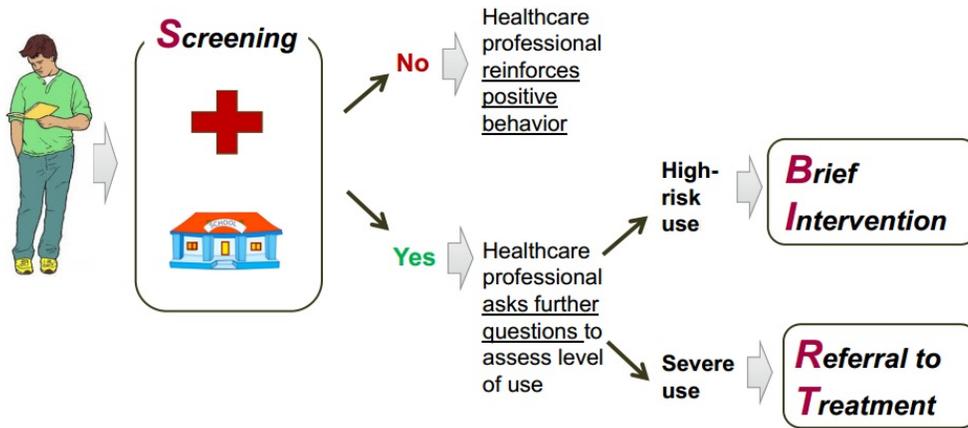
Planning for a Healthier Omaha Metro Area

Alcohol screening a vital part of CHIP

The Project Extra Mile August coalition meeting featured Kerry Kernen of the Douglas County Health Department (DCHD) to discuss its Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP).



Project Extra Mile (PEM) has been a member of DCHD's Integrated Care work group, formed during the previous CHIP, which is an ideal venue to grow and continue the work to integrate the use of **Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT)**. The [use of SBIRT can help find patients](#) who may have an early substance use problem and provide them with the care they need before it becomes a clinical issue. Currently, CHI Health has implemented the use of SBIRT in all of its family medicine clinics and is looking to expand the evidence-based tool to women's clinics. The Integrated Care work group hopes to encourage other health systems to follow suit.



CHA and CHIP Process:

Health departments across Nebraska undertake a Community Health Assessment (CHA) every 3-5 years to assess the status and needs of the community served. The data collected through the CHA are then utilized to educate organizations, healthcare systems, and community members on how the community is doing and to provide a factual basis in establishing the focus areas of the CHA and CHIP.

The CHA and CHIP are conducted by LiveWell, and this year's CHIP will include Cass, Douglas, Sarpy, and Pottawattamie (Iowa) Counties in the recognition that health counties don't stop at the county or state line. Usually, the data is collected via phone surveys, however this year a supplemental survey was conducted among Douglas County residents asking three simple questions:

1. What do you love about your community?
2. What keeps you up at night?
3. What is your hope for the next generation?

The results of the survey were analyzed by looking for themes. Also, during a recent Metro area **Changemaker Summit** five areas were prioritized: (1) Access to Care; (2) Injury/Violence; (3) Mental Health; (4) Nutrition, Physical Activity & Weight; and (5) Substance Abuse. Of these five, residents prioritized Mental Health and Access to Care as those which should be worked on in the next CHIP. Prioritization was followed by community conversations to truly understand the needs of the community and the allow community member participation in the current and future processes.

NEWS BRIEFS

Pilots, Passengers, and Public Health

United Airlines announced in August that it would be [tightening its regulations about airline pilot alcohol consumption](#), lengthening its pre-flight no-drinking time from eight hours to twelve hours. This change followed the arrest of two United pilots after they showed up intoxicated before a scheduled flight from Glasgow, Scotland to New Jersey. There is no evidence to indicate that United extending this pre-flight restriction would have had any impact in this case.

The truth is airports and alcohol service in flight is virtually impossible to enforce. In the absence of the airport policing itself, only ticketed passengers are allowed in the terminals, making liquor enforcement by local authorities challenging to say the least.

Additionally, many airports have expanded their alcohol sales in the hopes of increasing revenue. Passengers are encouraged to drink more and more often. Pilots, flight attendants, and other airline employees can get caught up in dangerous drinking behaviors as well, putting lives and equipment in peril.

What's the answer? The same strategies that work in other settings: look to [broader policies which have the best potential to reduce harm and save public costs](#). Chief among these are adequate enforcement of liquor laws, increasing alcohol taxes, reducing alcohol availability, and limiting alcohol marketing.



Recent incidents of airline pilot/crew excessive drinking:

- [In July, a Delta Airlines pilot was arrested in Minneapolis-St. Paul on suspicion of being intoxicated](#) before he was scheduled to fly to San Diego.
- A United Airlines [flight attendant was arrested](#) in August after allegedly boarding an aircraft while intoxicated and passing out during the flight from Chicago to South Bend, Indiana.
- In the first six months of 2019, [30 pilots failed breathalyzer tests in the Indian airline system](#), according to that nation's Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).

Recent incidents of airline passenger excessive drinking:

- A [49-year-old male punched a pilot](#) at McCarran International Airport in Las Vegas after he missed his flight and was informed by the crew that he was too intoxicated to fly.
- A 50-year-old intoxicated [Dallas man was arrested in Oklahoma for unruly behavior](#) following a Southwest flight. During the plane's landing he shouted "We're all going to die! We're all going to die! Hey kids, we're all going to die!" (The flight's passengers included a number of children of all ages.)
- A champion golfer was arrested after a British Airlines flight from Memphis to London after allegedly ["sexually assaulting a sleeping woman and urinating in the aisle of a plane while drunk."](#)

Getting Clarity on "Moderate" Drinking

The health claims offered by alcohol marketers may contribute just enough confusion and distraction to keep people from quitting or cutting back on their drinking, according to the authors of [a study published in the Canadian Medical Association Journal](#) and other experts [interviewed in The Fix](#).

That study looked at large numbers of people in the U.S. and Hong Kong, and found that quitting drinking led to considerable improvements in women's mental well-being. Lifetime alcohol abstainers reported the highest level of mental well-being among the study's subjects.

In [a discussion of their findings](#), the researchers point to reasons why messages about drinking and health are so muddled. One is that many drinkers aren't aware of science-based definitions of drinking limits (what is light drinking vs. moderate drinking vs. heavy or binge drinking). As a result, "it's common for people who think they are drinking moderately to actually be bingeing."

Another reason is that positive health claims (like claiming that moderate drinking can prevent heart disease) can muddy the waters enough to help justify continuing excessive alcohol use for those who do so. Alcohol industry operators call this alcohol's [health halo](#).

For example, via [The Fix](#):

Researcher Chris Gerling, who works at Cornell University's Department of Food Science, said that claims from red wine's supposed heart benefits to increase antioxidant content are often misguided. For example, to get the heart benefit from red wine, you would need to drink about 700 bottles a day, he said, which would have obvious negative health consequences.

The alcohol industry thrives on this confusion. After all, they rely on excessive alcohol consumption for the biggest part of their profits with [the heaviest 20% of drinkers consuming over 80% of the total volume sold](#).

Next Coalition Meeting
Wednesday, September 11, 2019
9:00 am
National Safety Council - Nebraska
11620 M Circle, Omaha, NE

A poster for a 2019 Recognition Dinner. The background is a light beige color with a grey wood-grain border on the left and right sides. The year "2019" is written in a large, red, cursive font at the top right. Below it, the words "RECOGNITION DINNER" are written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Underneath that, the time "6:00 p.m." is written in a smaller, black, sans-serif font. The date "Tuesday, November 19, 2019" is written in a black, sans-serif font. At the bottom, the location "Champions Run" is written in a black, sans-serif font. There are several orange and yellow autumn leaves scattered around the text, particularly on the left and right sides.

2019
RECOGNITION DINNER
6:00 p.m.
Tuesday, November 19, 2019
Champions Run



Project Extra Mile, 11620 M Circle, Omaha, NE, 68137 · 402.963.9047