



The Extra Mile

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

GOING THE DISTANCE: Public Health Day 2018

Advocates take public health message to the Capitol

About 30 community advocates and public health professionals - including 6 youth - braved heavy rain on March 26th for the **Public Health Day** at the Capitol - an annual opportunity to refresh advocacy skills at the local and state levels, to educate policymakers about substance use and related public health challenges in their communities, and to connect with senators and staff, while presenting themselves as a key community resource.

The morning session at Kaplan University featured instruction on engaging policymakers through education and advocacy, public health policies and trends, and legislative updates.

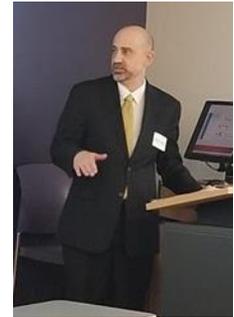
Project Extra Mile Executive Director, **Chris Wagner**, gave practical instruction to attendees on how to constructively engage with legislators and their staff, including the keys to effective education and advocacy.



Public Health Day 2018



Robert Pezzolesi, MPH (Chair, U.S. Alcohol Policy Alliance) then presented on the need for (and power of) advocacy efforts to implement public health policy change across a range of issues - including tobacco control, addiction, and alcohol policy.



These presentations were followed by brief updates by leading organizations focused on prevention and public health:



Erin Bramhall, J.D., (Program Coordinator, Coalition Rx) discussed developments in implementation of the evidence-based Strengthening Families Program and trends around opioid prescribing (including the fact that hydrocodone was found to be the most-prescribed drug in Nebraska). She stressed that vigilance was needed to ensure that the state continue to maintain its status of having one of the lowest rates of opioid-related death in the nation.

Nick Faustman (Nebraska Government Relations Director, American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network) outlined the public health impact of bills on ACS CAN's radar, including LB 438 (increasing the state's tobacco tax); LB 1062 (funding for tobacco use prevention and cessation); and, LB 838 (prohibiting access to tanning devices for minors).



Maggie Ballard (Prevention Specialist, Prevention Means Progress [PMP], Heartland Family Service) addressed the public health impact of cannabis-related legislation, including a proposed constitutional amendment which would legalize medical cannabis.

Julia Hebenstreit, J.D. (Executive Director, The Kim Foundation) gave an update on LB 998 (creating the "Collaborative School Behavioral and Mental Health Program) and other state issues around suicide prevention and mental health.



Chris Wagner then finished up the legislative updates with an update on LB 1120, noting that, if adopted, a proposed committee amendment to remove all alcohol-related provisions rendered the bill of less direct importance.

Attendees then headed to meetings with Senators at the Capitol building, where they shared information about their efforts to address substance abuse and mental health challenges in their communities and offered themselves as expert resources in those areas.



Following those meetings, 23 Nebraska Senators and staff then joined Project Extra Mile staff and community advocates for a luncheon in the Capitol building. [Senator Tom Brewer](#) delivered opening remarks about the closure of the beer stores in Whiteclay, the changes to the area - including economic development - and the challenges that lay ahead. Bob Pezzolesi followed by providing an overview of the research around evidence-based alcohol policies, including those recommended by the [Community Preventive Services Task Force](#) and the [World Health Organization](#).

Finally, Matthew Eckerberg - a young leader from the Monument Prevention Coalition - spoke to the group about the value of increasing Nebraska's beer tax and dedicating those funds to prevention and treatment efforts.

Overall, the event was an excellent opportunity for public health advocates and professionals from around the state to engage with policymakers around evidence-based policies and the need for robust prevention, treatment, recovery, and cancer control programs and policies.



Mixed Messages on St. Patrick's Day

Looking objectively at Nebraska's DUI problem

The March 19 edition of the *Omaha World-Herald* featured two articles which, when examined side-by-side, demonstrate the disconnect that our state experiences with regard to alcohol-related car crashes.

The first article: ["Police make 30 DUI arrests during special enforcement for St. Patrick's Day"](#)

Thirty drunken drivers were arrested in the week leading up to and including St. Patrick's Day, police said Sunday.

Of the 30 arrests for suspicion of driving while intoxicated, 22 were first-time offenders. Police said five DUI arrests were second offenses, two were for felony DUI and one was for driving under the influence of drugs.

The second article: ["Omaha bars welcome St. Patrick's Day partiers at 6 a.m. with green beer, 'Lucky Charms and Guinness' "](#)

To paraphrase one Dubliner die-hard: If you want to party all day, you've gotta start early.

"I'm surprised to see as many people as this out and ready to drink at 6 a.m.," said Joe Wells, general manager and co-owner of Annie's, as customers streamed in.

The new bar held its soft opening after the downtown parade last weekend. This weekend, Wells said, would serve as its grand opening: The bar planned an outdoor block party later in the day.

... At Dubliner Pub, the crowd grew by the minute. By 7 a.m., most seats were full. A robust bartending staff served up drinks and, for some customers, breakfast: Lucky Charms swimming in Guinness.

Alcohol-impaired traffic crashes kill about 10,500 Americans every year and have been on the increase recently after years of decline. Nebraska has one of our nation's highest rates of self-reported driving after drinking.

That will not change by merely repeating empty, vague platitudes about drinking "responsibly." It will change when we modify the alcohol environment, including the implementing [the evidence-based polices recommended by the National Academies.](#)

It also important to note that the harms resulting from excessive drinking don't stop at motor vehicle crashes, but extend to [alcohol-related cancers](#), [fetal alcohol spectrum disorders](#), and a [host of other health consequences.](#)

Stemming this tide will also require changes to our state's drinking culture, and the all-too-casual acceptance of binge drinking and intoxication.

NEWS BRIEFS

Industry funding of government study raises serious questions

Research results appear to be predetermined



As Nebraska strives to reduce STI rates, an alcohol tax increase could be an invaluable strategy

A large body of research has found that research studies funded by industries with a financial interest in the studies' outcome tend (not surprisingly) to be favorable to the funder. This has been true for research funded by the [tobacco](#), [food](#), [pharmaceuticals](#), [plastics](#), and other industries.

For this reason, many alcohol research scholars and public health advocates were disturbed by the report from [the New York Times](#) that employees and researchers affiliated with the federal government's National Institute on Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse (NIAAA) actively solicited the alcohol industry to fund a large-scale study on the health benefits of moderate alcohol consumption.

"The documents and interviews show that the institute waged a vigorous campaign to court the alcohol industry, paying for scientists to travel to meetings with executives, where they gave talks strongly suggesting that the study's results would endorse moderate drinking as healthy ... The fund-raising may have violated N.I.H. policy, which prohibits employees from soliciting or suggesting donations, funds or other resources intended to support activities. At the least, the campaign is bound to raise more questions about the independence of the investigators and the scientific integrity of the huge trial. The presentations gave the alcohol industry an opportunity to preview the trial design and vet the investigators. Indeed, the scientist leading the meetings was eventually chosen to head the huge clinical trial."

In response to this report, there have been calls for the clinical trial to be discontinued, and for [the NIAAA-alcohol industry relationship to be investigated](#).

Those calls intensified with a [follow-up report in STAT](#) revealing that NIAAA officials promised liquor industry representatives that they would reject studies of the impact of alcohol advertising on underage drinking.

More to follow as this story develops.

The Alcohol Policy 18 Conference is just around the corner!

Time is running out to register for the [Alcohol Policy 18 \(AP18\)](#), the only national conference focused on evidence-based alcohol policy. The event taking place on **April 11-13, 2018** at the Renaissance Arlington Capital View Hotel, just outside of Washington, D.C.

The conference program is available [here](#).

We hope to see you in D.C. in two weeks!



Omaha Metro Coalition Meeting

Please join us for **coffee and conversation** as the Project Extra Mile team provides an overview from the Alcohol Policy 18 Conference, which takes place April 10-13 in Washington D.C.



Thank you for your involvement!
Jennifer Pollock
Coalition Chair

MEETING LOCATION:
La Vista Police Department
Community Room
7701 S. 96th St, LaVista, NE

For more information:
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Please Note the Date

Wednesday
April 18, 2018
9:00 a.m.



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