



Business Planning and Research for New Ventures

Geauga Family First Council/PfS
PAAC Summary Report
June 21, 2006

The PFS process conducted in Geauga County in 2004-2005 resulted in the decision to pursue two separate, but related, strategies to address the gaps identified in meeting the needs of Geauga County's youth. The primary strategy was implementation of the All Stars program. The secondary strategy was implementation of an awareness and educational campaign, called "Gauga Community Parent Alert," encouraging parents to continually communicate to their children that underage alcohol consumption is unacceptable. The primary target market for the campaign was parents of middle school age students in Geauga County. Secondary audiences included parents of high school age students as well as 4th and 5th grade parents. This report summarizes the results of the campaign.

The campaign included a series of six postcards, each with photographs depicting the potential consequences of underage drinking, as well as local statistics about underage drinking and information for parents relative to talking to their children about the subject. These postcards were mailed to approximately 4,500 households in Geauga County within the target market. Some of the images and information from the postcards was also used for posters and billboards that were placed throughout the county, paid advertisements in local publications, and press releases. A total of about ten articles resulted from sending five press releases, two billboards were placed, and about eight advertisements were run.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of this campaign, a brief survey was mailed to the same households approximately two weeks after the last of the six postcards was mailed. A total of 470 valid surveys were returned (280 parents of middle schoolers), representing about a 10.5% response rate (accounting for those that were undeliverable due to address errors).

Overall, the campaign was an enormous success. Although the exact number of households impacted will never be known, the survey responses indicated that at a minimum, hundreds of families were positively impacted by the information that was provided in the postcards, articles and billboards.

A little over half of all respondents remembered seeing all six of the postcards, and most of the rest recalled seeing at least some of them. Only about 11% did not recall seeing any of them. (Admittedly, the true level of awareness of the cards is likely lower than what is stated here as those who did see them, and take an interest, were probably more likely to respond to the survey.) In addition, 42% indicated they had seen one or more of the articles that ran in the local newspapers about the campaign, and about 35% said they had seen one or more of the billboards.

The messages of the campaign were heard loud and clear. Approximately 88% of respondents found the postcards to be at least somewhat informative and 76% found them at least somewhat effective. And, more than half said they learned something new from reading them.

Respondents generally had accurate recall of the contents of the postcards. The vast majority (89%) recalled seeing statistics about underage alcohol use in Geauga County as well as suggestions for talking to their children about underage alcohol use. The majority (76%) also recalled seeing photographs of underage drinking scenarios and statistics about the benefits of talking to their children about the effects of alcohol.

When asked what they remember specifically about the postcards, the graphic pictures were by far mentioned the most often, either in general, or with reference to specific ones. The “Daddy’s Little Girl” postcard was mentioned most often, as well as scenes showing the police/sheriff and teens being arrested. The use of facts and statistics was also mentioned frequently, with quite a few noting how many kids are drinking, and at what a young age. The message around parents’ responsibility and the laws around hosting/providing alcohol were also recalled with some frequency.

The postcards had the desired impact of provoking action among the majority of respondents. About 62% of all respondents indicated they are more likely to talk to their children now about the dangers of underage alcohol use as a result of reading the postcards. And, 71% are more likely now than before reading the postcards to continue to talk to their children about this when they are in high school. In addition, 52% indicated they are likely to implement one or more of the suggestions they read in the postcards. Among the primary target group, fully 80% said they discussed the postcards with one or more of their children, and 55% said they showed them to one or more of their children. About 10% noted that they saved the cards, some posting them the refrigerator or elsewhere to serve as a constant reminder. In general, the postcards were put to good use as a tool for discussion, and as a way to visually share the issues with their children.

Many people chose to provide additional comments at the end of the survey that provided more revealing insight into their thoughts about the campaign and the impact it had on them. The following are just a few examples of the types of comments that were made:

- “Thank you for your time and efforts! I did not realize the children began these behaviors so young. It changed the way I think - especially because they were Geauga kids. I will start learning more to protect my soon-to-be 6th grader. Thank you all who did this for us!”

- “I would appreciate occasional postcards, such as the ones just sent, to remind me of ways to talk to my boys about underage drinking.”
- “I hope that we can continue seeing this kind of help for us (parents) that are terrified with the way things are going in such a tragic path.”
- “I liked showing the postcards to my kids because I explained that it could happen to them if they use drugs & alcohol. My kids were scared of it happening to them. Thank you!”
- “This campaign served to reinforce my beliefs and actions and reassure me that I'm not overreacting.”
- “If it saves 1 child its worth it.”
- “Keep them coming! It provides a convenient way to discuss the issue with my kids.”
- “Keep us informed - I have found that most parents are naïve about teenage drinking and think we are too strict or worry too much.”
- “Although aware of dangers of underage drug/alcohol use, items such as the postcards are always welcome as reinforcement or to open a dialogue. Please continue your efforts!”
- “Receiving the postcards gave me the opportunity to discuss this with my children ASAP.”
- “Thank you for providing my husband and I with conversation starters, filled with facts about why our children should refrain from drinking alcohol.”
- “The postcards hang in our kitchen as a reminder. It helped give a reason to talk to our sons about drug/alcohol abuse....the pictures on the postcards were useful. Plus, it was someone else (other than mom or dad) reminding them of the dangers of alcohol. There were facts printed. Thank you for your efforts.”
- “Every time I received a postcard I discussed it with both my children. It was a good tool to continue teaching my children about the dangers of drinking.”
- “I highly support and encourage your campaign. I showed every one to my child and she saved some of them - they left an impression and got the message across.”
- “I think it's a great way to open discussions with our children.”
- “These postcards are great! It's a constant reminder to keep talking to your kids, not just one time. As parents we know this info and know to talk to our kids but this is a constant reminder to keep talking and sharing the info!”
- “I think the postcards were an effective message to me and my children - I hope to keep receiving them!”

In summary, many of those in the target audience saw the campaign, and of those who did, most heard the message and acted on it. This was indeed the goal, so the campaign ultimately achieved what it set out to do.