

BACIC BEVERAGE ALCOHOL COMMUNITY INFORMATION COUNCIL

BY MARK MILLER

BACIC started in 2006. The 501(C)(3) represents the Beer, Wine and Liquor Wholesalers and their business partners across Arizona. Their goal is to educate and encourage students to wait until they are 21 before consuming any liquor products.



It was so fun watching the World Series this October. Most of the fans in the ballparks had a cold beer in their hands and a stressful look on their face. A ball game is always the best place to enjoy a cold beer.

When I started in the beer industry, it was a simple business. Very few packages and not many brands. Light beers were not even a thing until the middle 1970's, and the sales started slowly. No one even knew what a hand-crafted beer was. The beer industry did not even look at the liquor and wine brands as competitors.

When you stepped into your favorite watering hole, the bartender was mixing or reaching for what you always asked for, and most customers were loyal and predictable. Most bars felt like an episode from the TV show Cheers. My favorite line from the show was coach asking, "What's shaking Norm", and he said, "Both chins and all four cheeks".

Until 1984, most alcoholic products were consumed in bars and restaurants. In 1980, Mothers Against Drunk Driving, "MADD" started to campaign to raise the drinking age to 21. The deaths on the streets and highways in the U.S. from drunk drivers were rising most years. That all started to change in 1984 when the national drinking age to consume any alcohol was raised to 21 years of age.



In the mid 1980's, most of the beer, wine, and liquor companies started to include Don't Drink and Drive messages in their print and TV advertising. They have continued to support the Don't Drink and Drive message for over 40 years. The grocery, convenience and independent stores in Arizona and across the U.S. have spent time training their employees and also invested in technology to check IDs to ensure that those buying alcoholic products are over 21 years of age.



Raising the nationwide drinking age to 21, having support from parents and teachers, lowering the BAC level to .08 for DWI charges, more state enforcement from police and liquor control departments, stronger and higher penalties for driving under the influence, and the messaging from the beer, wine and liquor companies have all contributed to drunk driving deaths going down from approximately 28,000 in 1980 to just under 13,000 in 2023. The numbers are still too high.

Even with the reductions in drinking and driving, the alcohol industry still wanted to do more to reduce underage drinking. In 2006, the Arizona liquor wholesalers, major beer, wine and liquor companies started the Beverage Alcohol Community Information Council, BACIC. The Arizona Restaurant Association, (ARA) helped to manage the 501(C)(3) until 2023.

BACIC started "Own Up", and the message was taken to high schools across the greater Phoenix area. The goal was to spend time with the students and convince them to pledge to wait until they were 21 before drinking any alcoholic products. The message was well received and worked until 2020. Then COVID changed everything.

Most of the schools across Arizona were closed and moved to virtual classrooms. When the schools did finally reopen, they were very restrictive on who could come onto campus. The Own Up message and the good work that BACIC accomplished ran into more roadblocks.

The Arizona Restaurant Association and their members had a hard time during COVID. ARA decided they needed to focus on helping their members recover and asked the board members of BACIC to look for another charity to take the lead.

The BACIC board members were also members of AFMA and knew that they had the same goals in helping to reduce underage drinking. In the summer of 2024, AFMA took over managing the charity and pursuing their goals.

In 2024, I retired as President of AFMA and volunteered to take over as Chairman of the Board. Working with the current AFMA President, Lisa Bednar, we decided to look for organizations that were already in place and had the same goals.

Lisa and I reached out to Ben Henry, the Director of the Arizona Department of Liquor License Control (AZDLLC) to discuss the BACIC goals. He introduced us to Jessica Valadez, AZDLLC Prevention Specialist. Jessica has been extremely helpful as well and offered to make connections with organizations across the state with similar goals.

Jessica introduced us to an organization called VIVE 18. We partnered with them for an event in Prescott in September. They had over 120 high school students from across the state for 2 days. The presenter and owner of VIVE 18, Jake White, did a good job of presenting our message. Jake had a banner printed that he asked the students to sign and asked them to wait until they were 21 before drinking any alcoholic products.



BACIC plans to partner up with VIVE 18 in December for another event in the Phoenix area. We are also working on another program for Spring 2026 focusing on alcohol-free proms and graduation events.

Even if you do not drink any alcoholic products, you are benefiting from beer, wine, and liquor companies and their wholesalers. They pay so much of their profits to taxes at the state and federal levels. They offer good paying jobs that contribute to our state economy. Their company cultures encourage their employees to give their time and money back to those in need.

You are probably thinking that after 40 years in the beer and beverage industry, I might be a little prejudice. (Yeah Maybe); but I still know good people and good companies when I see them.

Thank You



HENSLEY Beverage Company

