

Policy Change for a Safer Nightlife in Portland, ME: *Successes & Lessons Learned*

21 Reasons Coalition
Medical Care Development, Inc.
August 2008



About us



Substance Abuse Prevention Projects



Field project: 21 Reasons

- Based on CMCA model program – Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol
- Uses community organizing to strengthen community policies, enforcement and attitudes to reduce youth access to alcohol.

www.21reasons.org



Training & TA: MESAP

- Training, technical assistance, and tools for communities to translate into practice the latest research in environmental prevention.
- Informed by real-life lessons from our field project, 21 Reasons.



Today's presentation:

1. What strategies has our coalition implemented to improve safety in our downtown entertainment district?
2. What have been our successes so far?
3. What are some key lessons we learned from the process?



Warm-up & Introductions

Share with the person sitting next to you:

- **Name & where you're from**
- **Describe your community's "entertainment district":**
 - What are some public safety issues?
 - How do these issues relate to underage drinking issues in your community?





Part 1

Background

Portland, ME

- Maine's largest city with 63,000 full-time residents (census.gov)
- 2 million annual visitors and part-time residents per year
- One of the few working waterfronts left in the United States
- Portland's Old Port is both a working waterfront and a chic shopping, dining, and entertainment district

References: www.portlandregion.com and www.portlandmaine.com





http://www.lazyenvironmentalist.com/portland_maine.jpg



http://farm2.static.flickr.com/1191/747820987_8f9f47bdc3.jpg



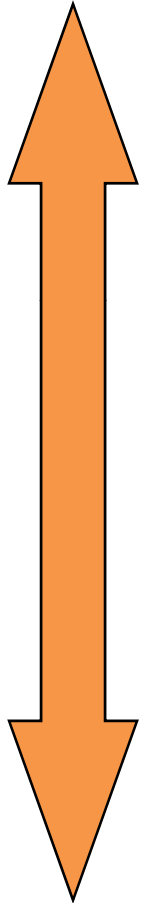
http://graphics.boston.com/bonzai-fba/Globe_Photo/2007/01/25/1169753414_1371.jpg

Coalition history:

- CMCA project started 2003 in response to community tragedy
- Action Team began meeting monthly in fall of 2004 with all key sectors represented.
- Action Planning process: winter '04
- Federal Drug-Free Communities grant started October 2005 (now in year 3).



Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol (CMCA):



- **Step 1: Assess the community.**
- **Step 2: Create a core leadership group.**
- **Step 3: Develop a plan of action.**
- **Step 4: Build a mass base of support.**
- **Step 5: Implement the action plan.**
- **Step 6: Evaluate efforts.**
- **Step 7: Maintain and institutionalize efforts.**

From Wagenaar, A.C., Gehan, J.P., Jones-Webb, R., Toomey, T.L., Forster, J.L. (1999). Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol: Lessons and results from a 15-community randomized trial. *Journal of Community Psychology*. 27(3):315-326.

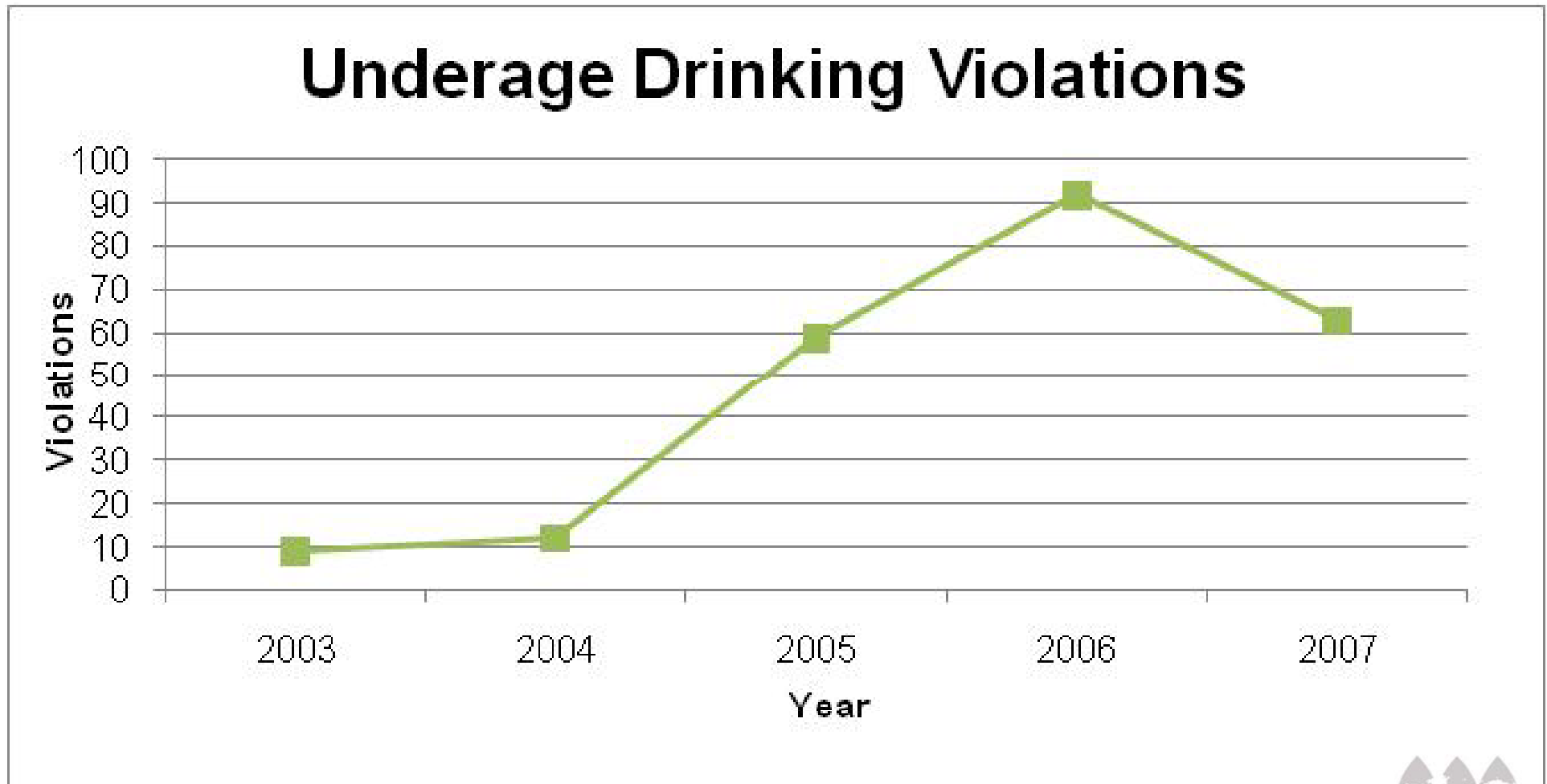


ACTION PLAN Priorities:

- 1. Strengthen ENFORCEMENT**
- 2. Reduce AVAILABILITY**
- 3. Strengthen NORMS**
- 4. Increase PARENTAL MONITORING**



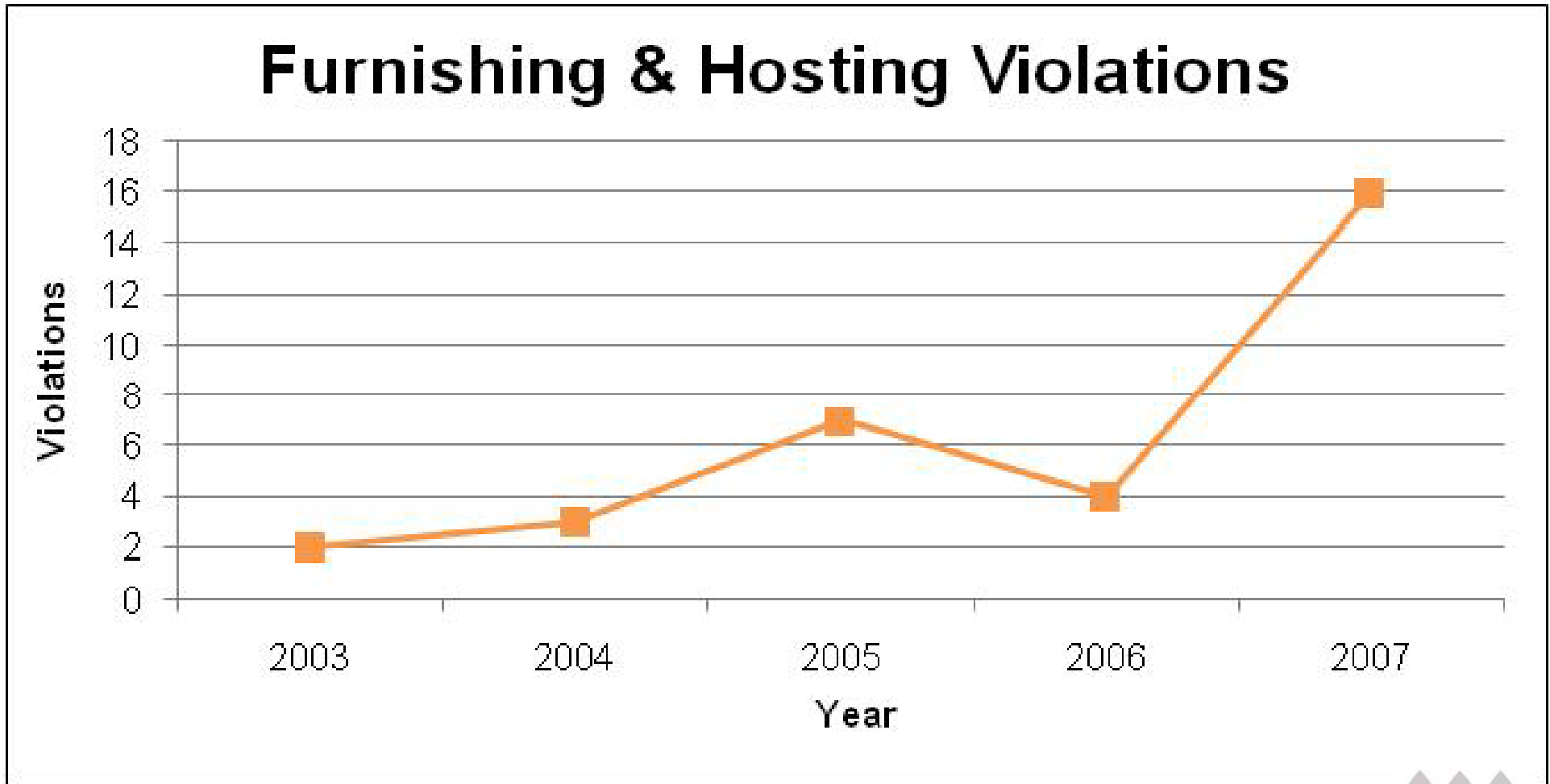
Results: Minor in Possession



Portland Police Department



Results: Furnishing alcohol to a minor or a place for minor to consume alcohol



Portland Police Department



RESULTS: Student Survey Data

2004 and 2006 MYDAUS, grades 6-12

- **ENFORCEMENT**

“I would be caught by police”

↑ from 22% to 27%

- **AVAILABILITY:**

“Alcohol is very hard to get”

(high school)

↑ from 15% to 20%



RESULTS: Student Survey Data

2004 and 2006 MYDAUS, grades 6-12

↓ **30-day alcohol use**

• **36% to 31%**

↓ **2-week binge drinking**

• **20% to 17%**

↓ **all other substances**





Part 2

Addressing public safety in
Portland's downtown:

Strategies & Successes

Defining the problem

- In spring of 2006, 21 Reasons was appointed to Mayor's special task force to address public safety issues in downtown district:

1. High policing costs

2. Violence, crime, intoxicated driving

3. Underage drinking



Defining the problem

- **RETAIL AVAILABILITY issues:**
 - Density: 1 bar for every 11 households!
 - No compliance checks since BLE disbanded in '03.
 - No regular training for servers or managers.

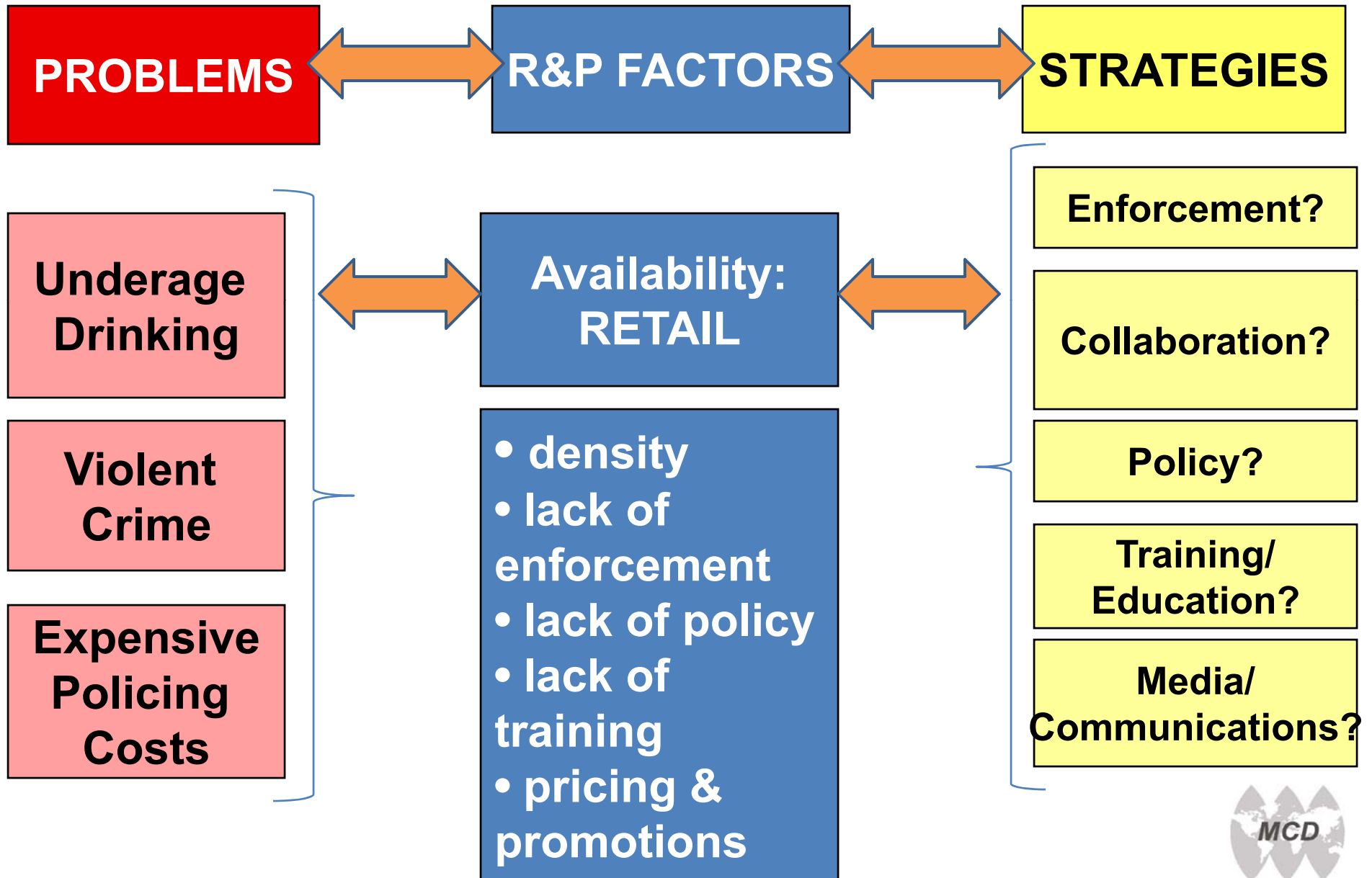


Defining the problem

- **More RETAIL AVAILABILITY issues:**
 - Lack of consistent business policies.
 - Lack of controls on pricing & promotions.
 - Council's renewal of licenses regardless of recommendations from PD.



Sample Logic Model



Alcohol Density Research

Density of bars and off-premise retail outlets is associated with higher rates of assault & other alcohol-related problems.

- Gruenewald, P.J.; and Remer, L. 2006.
- LaBouvie, E. & Ontkush, M. 1998.
- Scribner, R., Mackinnon, D. & Dwyer, J. 1994.
- Runcek, D. & Maier, P. 1991.





<http://www.cooltownstudios.com/images/maine-portland.jpg>



<http://www.travelguideofamerica.com/mainstreets/Portland.jpg>

Strategy: Reduce Bar Density

- **Research** to analyze the problem and develop proposal that fits community needs & readiness:
 - What does the research recommend?
(no clear #)
 - What we know from local data? **1 bar for every 11 households!**
 - What is feasible to include in local ordinance?
Tie to entertainment license
 - What will the community accept? **100 ft.**



Strategy: Reduce Bar Density

- **Outreach** to mobilize community members
- **Partnership** between key stakeholders to move it forward
 - Police Department
 - Downtown Bar Owner's Association
 - Downtown District
 - Community members



Strategy: Reduce Bar Density

- **Media advocacy** (Op Eds, news interviews) to educate the public and promote the policy change
- **Education of decision-makers**
 - Lots of 1x1 contact to get Councilors on board
 - Testimony from 21 Reasons, community leaders, & bar owners at many, many public hearings...



Success!

- 2007: After nearly a year of work (and votes **against** it by both the Planning Board & Public Safety Committee), local ordinance was passed by City Council to require **minimum 100 ft. dispersal** requirements for new liquor/entertainment licenses.



But wait...

- With new membership on the City Council, efforts are underway to repeal the ordinance.
- Working 1x1 with allies on the Council to make sure concerns and questions are addressed with the most up-to-date information.



A comprehensive approach:

- Compliance checks
- Seller/Server training
- Bar owner's agreement
- Best practices brochure
- Social marketing and assessment-feedback tools for young adult audience



Compliance Checks

- Retail compliance checks by Portland PD began in 2007
 - No enforcement had happened since 2003, when Maine BLE ended.
- Backlash from local officials and business owners:
 - “Why are they doing this?” “Not fair!”
 - “What protocol are they using?”



Compliance Checks

- 1x1 advocacy with local officials to gain support for enforcement efforts
- Testimony at public hearings to support enforcement efforts
- Media advocacy: Op Ed, letters
 - Publicize enforcement to increase deterrence
 - Increase Council & community support for compliance checks



Results: Compliance Checks

- Round 1: 57% non-compliance
- Round 2: 36% non-compliance
- Round 3: 10% non-compliance

More recently:

- ...6/21/08: 47% non-compliance
- ...7/25/08: 8% non-compliance

2008 youth survey will tell us whether we have achieved a further decrease in the percentage of youth who believe alcohol is easy to get.



Certified Seller/Server Training

- Led by former BLE agent Frank Lyons, well-known and well-liked by bar owners
- Special invitation to owners & managers, distributed by police
- Focus on the importance of putting policies & practices in place to protect the business, clientele, and public.



Responsible Bar Management Guidelines

- Developed with recommendations from 21 Reasons
- Adopted unanimously by downtown bar owner's association – with encouragement from Frank.
- Includes policy commitments for responsible pricing & promotions and preventing sales to minors and VIP's.



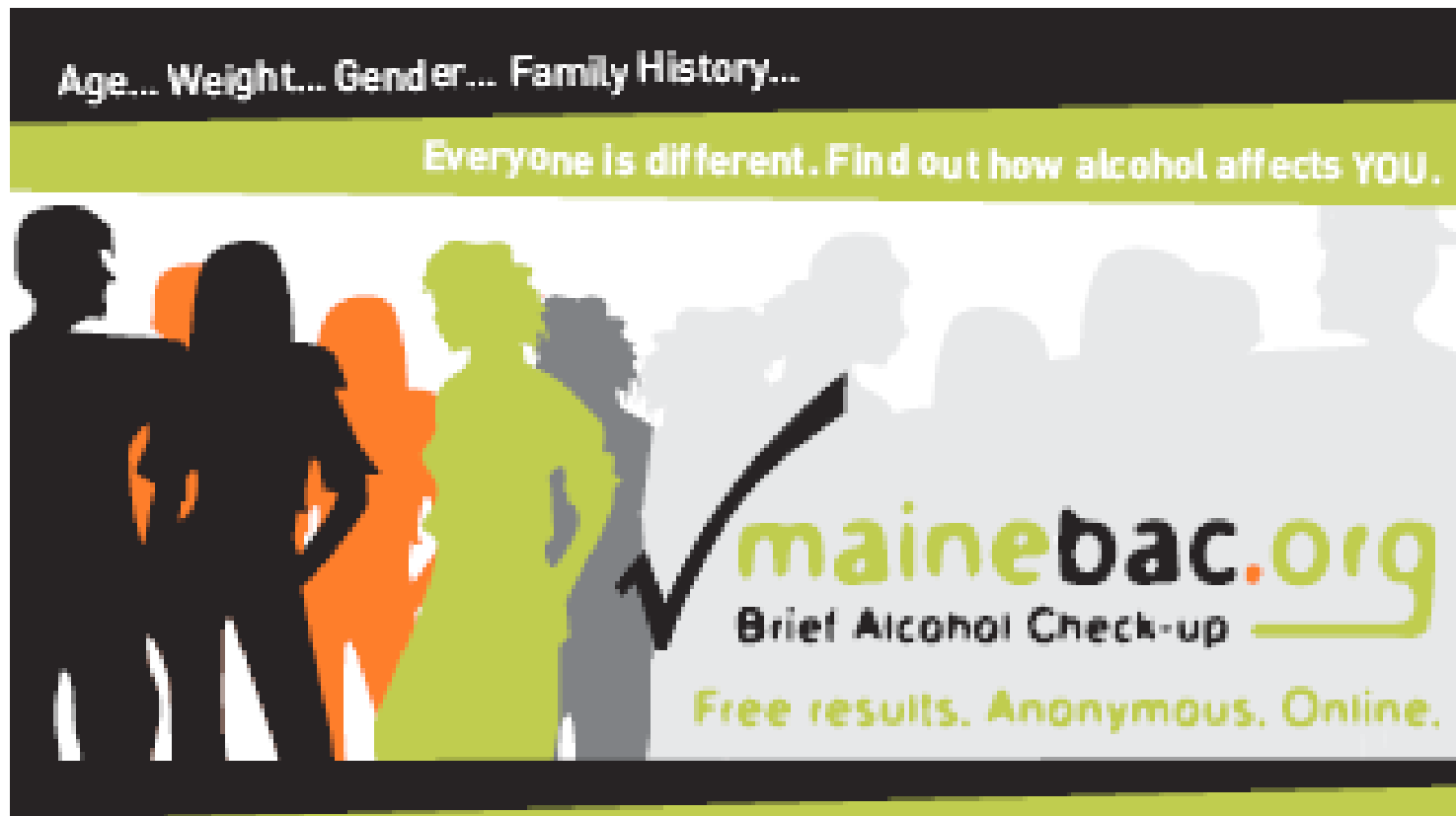
City Liquor License Brochure

- Best practices & resources
- Maine Law summary
- Distributed by City to all applicants and licensees



Complementary efforts...

Social marketing & assessment-feedback for young adults:



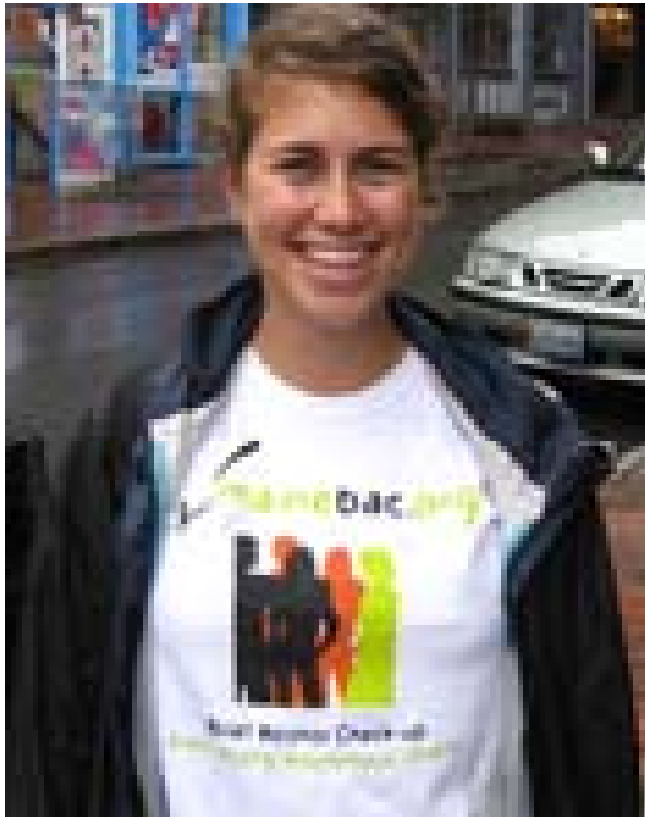
Age... Weight... Gender... Family History...

Everyone is different. Find out how alcohol affects YOU.

mainebac.org
Brief Alcohol Check-up
Free results. Anonymous. Online.



MaineBAC.org



- Uses evidence-based e-CHUG tool from San Diego State University
- Pilot program – first time in community (non-college) setting
- Marketed by young adults, to young adults – wallet cards, coasters, carabineers
- 1 600 people took survey in the first weekend



Part 3

Lessons Learned

Portland lessons:

- **“Evidence-based” doesn’t equal “how-to.”**



Portland lessons:

- **1 x 1 is always most effective, regardless of the level of policy change.**



Portland lessons:

- **Reputation counts.**



Portland lessons:

- **Don't bother trying to convert the opposition.**
 - **But do make sure they like you anyway!**



Portland lessons:

- **It's the final vote that matters.**



Portland lessons:

- **It ain't over when it's over.**



Resources & samples:

- Dispersal ordinance
- Responsible Bar Management Guidelines
- Online at www.21reasons.org:
 - Sample Opinion Editorials: bar density, compliance checks
 - City Liquor License Brochure
 - Research summary
 - And more!



21
reasons



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