



# Success Stories

Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws Program

NEWS FROM THE FIELD

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**The OJJDP Enforcing the Underage Drinking Laws Initiative supports cooperation between community organizations, enforcement agencies, youth, and other concerned citizens to change local ordinances and enforcement practices.**

## Youth In Action Push For Keg Reg.

Minnesota's Youth In Action (YIA) Team played an important role in identifying and addressing the need for keg registration in that State. Their success is an example of youth advocating for positive change in the alcohol environment.

In Minnesota, as in many other places, parties are a primary source of alcohol for underage drinkers. Frequently, this alcohol is provided in large kegs, giving dozens of youth access to cheap beer. Without some form of keg registration, law enforcement officers are powerless to trace kegs back to an adult provider or purchaser whom they can hold responsible.

Keg registration is not a new idea in Minnesota; some 11 years ago, a similar bill was proposed by State Representative Mary Jo McGuire. "I thought police would find the law useful," says McGuire, now retired from the State House. Alas, her proposal met stiff resistance from colleagues; she could not even arrange a hearing for the bill. With no support, the bill died.

A few years later, Minnesota's Youth in Action took up keg registration as a policy goal. The idea was suggested by a member of the YIA legislative team during a brainstorming session. "The team saw it as a problem—keg parties in fields, in houses...", says Leah Preiss, Youth Coordinator for MADD MN. They partnered with Minnesota Join Together to work for a keg registration law in their State; the first step was to approach Rep. McGuire and offer to help.

McGuire was happy to revisit the issue and agreed to work with the YIA team. In the years since her first attempt, attitudes had changed somewhat—and the State had just passed a dram shop law, which made retailers more concerned about their legal liability. Nonetheless, the team faced an uphill battle, and the bill again met stiff resistance initially.

Undaunted, the Youth In Action team took the battle to the State Legislature year after year, holding press conferences, visiting their representatives, and giving testimony to legislative committees. After five years of this hard work, the YIA team and others finally saw the keg registration bill pass.

### >Our Point:

**Communities, states, and law enforcement are successfully changing laws, regulations, and enforcement practices to reduce underage drinking.**

In March, 2002, the bill was signed and Minnesota joined 19 other States with keg registration laws. Now anyone buying a keg in Minnesota has to register and pay a \$50 deposit, and the registration records stay on file for at least 90 days with the retailer. When police find keg beer at underage parties, they know they now have means to trace it back to the source.

The commitment and dedication of Minnesota's Youth In Action team shows the power young people can have in shaping their communities and States. Not only were youth instrumental in getting the bill passed; they chose it as a goal and made it a priority. Says former Representative McGuire: "It wouldn't have happened if youth hadn't brought it back."

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