In a recent study conducted by the Marin Institute:

- 1 out of every 8 ads were related to alcohol and all were displayed to under-21 users.
- The top 10 selling beer brands had 93 pages and 1.1 million fans. The top 10 selling spirit brands had 334 pages, with more than 3.2 million fans. Only 50% of the pages reviewed restricted access based on age.
- Over 500 Facebook applications are associated with the term “alcohol”. 4 of the 6 applications reviewed were accessible to underage users.
- More than 4,400 events were found associated with the 5 best selling beer and liquor brands. No age restrictions were found.
- When searching Facebook groups using the terms “alcohol”, more than 58,000 results appeared. None were restricted based on age.
Not Just a Phase?

Problem drinking during the late teenage years is a real problem, not just a phase, and can signal problem drinking in young adulthood, according to a new study CNN Health reports recently. The findings are published in Alcoholism: Clinical and Experimental Research.

Lead study author Richard R. Rose of Indiana University stated, “The key finding was that the more drinking-related problems experienced by an adolescent at age 18, the greater the likelihood that adolescent would be diagnosed with alcoholism seven years later, at age 25.” He went on to explain, "The analysis of co-twins ruled out factors such as parental drinking and household atmosphere as the source of the association, because twins jointly experience these." Rose said that because twin teens in the study had the same parental, environmental and genetic factors, the results provide strong evidence that drinking behavior at age 18 is a strong predictor for drinking behavior at age 25.

The study involved 597 twins enrolled in long-term Finnish study of twins. At age 18 the twins took the Rutgers Alcohol Problem Index (RAPI), which is a self-administered questionnaire designed to measure alcohol drinking related problems. Rose said the RAPI is one of the most widely used assessments of problematic teen drinking. Study participants were later interviewed in-person at age 25 to assess alcohol dependence.

The study found that 52% of teens had RAPI scores reflecting problematic drinking at age 18, and those results held at age 25 when the young adults were tested for alcohol dependence. 46.2% met the criteria for alcohol dependence and 1.5% for alcohol abuse. RAPI scores in late teen years “robustly predict alcohol diagnoses in early adulthood. Accordingly, our results also provide new evidence that one pathway to problem drinking in early adulthood is a direct one from problem drinking in adolescence,” according to the study. Rose says the findings show that teen drinking problems can chart a course to problems with alcohol in young adulthood.

- From UDETC Resource Alert Summary, March 2011
Nature or Nurture?

We know alcoholism runs in families -- children with alcoholic parents have quadruple the risk of developing a drinking problem later in life than those without -- but is the link genetic or the result of other influences?

According to a Feb. 8 Wall Street Journal article outlining the evidence for "alcoholism genes," it is probably both.

Researchers from the Collaborative Study on the Genetics of Alcoholism, a 22-year National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) investigation into the relationship between DNA and alcoholism, have put together compelling evidence from family studies indicating the problem has roots in nature versus nurture.

For instance, boys born to alcoholic fathers are nine times more likely to develop a drinking problem. Children with an alcoholic birth parent who are adopted in infancy have almost the same risk for alcoholism as they would have had they been raised by that parent.

Studies in specific ethnic groups also support a genetic link, according to David Goldman, M.D., chief of the Laboratory of Neurogenetics at NIAAA and the study's senior investigator. About 40 percent of East Asians have a gene variation that causes reddening of the skin, increased heart beat, and nausea after drinking -- aptly called "Asian flush." These symptoms are a strong deterrent to drinking.

Conversely, a gene variation found almost exclusively in Finnish people has been linked to severe impulsivity. "Almost all these severely impulsive individuals [were] also alcoholic," said Goldman. "And their worse impulsive problems occurred while they were drunk."

Although the identification of a relationship between specific genes and alcoholism has spurred promising new therapies that target them, the investigators caution that it's unlikely genetics will provide all the answers.

"All too often, you read that they've found a gene for this and a gene for that, and it's very rarely that simple," said Howard Edenberg, Ph.D., Chancellor's Professor of Biochemistry and Molecular Biology at Indiana University and one of the study's principal investigators.

"With a disease like alcoholism, where dozens or hundreds of genes could have a small impact, to find any one of them in the size of the studies we are doing, you have to be sort of lucky," he said. "And the chance that the next group will be lucky is not that high."

Social, cultural, and environmental influences muddy the causal relationship even further. Not everyone with an alcoholic parent or a genetic variation associated with alcoholism becomes an alcoholic. According to Edenberg, DNA is not destiny where human behavior is concerned.

"You can carry all kinds of genes," he concluded. "If you manage to push away the glass or the bottle, you won't have an alcoholism problem."

Source: http://www.jointogether.org/blog/posts/2011/alcoholism-is-it-all-in-the.html
This Just In...

Spring is in the air, as they say. While we all welcome the warmer, sunnier days, this is also a time for increased underage drinking. Spring Break, Proms, and graduations are just around the bend, so it’s time to remind our teenagers’ about the dangers of underage drinking.

Here are some resources that may be useful:

- MADD’s new parent resource, *Power of Parents, It’s Your Influence*, can be found by visiting www.madd.org

- *Make a Difference: Talk to Your Child about Alcohol*, from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, can be found at http://www.niaaa.nih.gov/Publications/PamphletsBrochuresPosters/English/Documents/MakeAdiff.pdf.

- Educate yourself! To learn more about the effects of alcohol on the adolescent body, visit the following link: http://www.drugabuse.gov/PDF/Scholastic/HeadsUp-Student-Yr6.pdf.
Legislative Update

We’re almost there! You’ll recall that in last month’s edition of Spotlight, we discussed the status of the social host bills—both House and Senate versions.

You’ll be pleased to know that both are still “live”, meaning they are both still very much going through the legislative process.

To date, House bill 504 has been voted out of the House, to the Senate, and back to the House for a concurrence vote. When HB 504 went to the Senate, a change was made to the language of the bill so that parents who knowingly allow these parties to take place will be held accountable (in the original version of the bill it’s parents who should have known—a small but important difference). It is now necessary for HB 504 to go back to the House for a floor vote there concerning this language change.

Senate bill 2597 has passed the Senate and the House and is now on the House calendar under a motion to reconsider. This just means that it’s being held there until the House bill reaches it’s final destination.

It’s going very well and everyone is be applauded for their hard work! And we’ll continue to cross our fingers that the next legislative update reads “Social Host Bill becomes Law!”

All bills can be tracked by visiting http://billstatus.ls.state.ms.us/