

Marin Independent Journal

Marin Voice: Parent modeling in the spotlight for ‘Raise the Bar’ initiative

By [Lisa Klein](#) |
November 18, 2021

During the pandemic, alcohol use rose throughout the United States.

In May 2020, Nielsen reported that alcohol sales grew 54% nationally during the week of March 21, 2020, which was the first lockdown week for many states, as compared with one year before. The report also found that online sales of alcohol significantly increased by 262% from 2019 to 2020.

Then three weeks later in April 2020, the World Health Organization released a warning that alcohol use during the pandemic may potentially exacerbate health concerns and risk-taking behaviors.

Here we are now in the fall of 2021 and, despite the forward movement of COVID-19 recovery, not much has changed.

While Marin County is again becoming the healthiest county in California, which it has been for 11 of the past 12 years, its adult alcohol consumption is still higher than 80% of the state’s counties. Marin’s higher than average alcohol consumption rate includes underage use too. In Marin County, 11th graders’ current alcohol use is more than 70% higher than the state average. This high level of underage substance use can change. Our youth deserve to grow up in an environment that reduces the risks and harms associated with underage substance use.

To improve our community environment, Marin Healthy Youth Partnerships developed the Raising the Bar Campaign in collaboration with Marin Prevention Network in 2017. Raising the Bar is a parent modeling program aimed at changing the social norms of alcohol consumption and other substance use at all youth-oriented events. Today, based on our campaign’s impact, parents, program directors and community members are now working together to promote healthy choices and keep youth events substance-free.

Our intention is not to eliminate adult alcohol use from our community. Rather, it’s to be sure that adults are mindful of substance use and behavior at youth gatherings because kids hear and see everything and pick up on adult behaviors and patterns quickly.

It’s important for kids to see that both youth and adults can have a good time without drinking or using substances while attending youth events.

“There’s no requirement or reason for alcohol to be included/available at any event, private or public,” District 2 Supervisor Katie Rice said for a Raising the Bar program presentation. “Fun and socializing can happen without drinking being part of them, and that’s what we want to model for our kids. So as a community, why not establish a baseline that all kid-centered, family-centered public events be alcohol free?”

Tamalpais Union High School District Superintendent Tara Taupier is another community leader in full support of that baseline.

“This partnership is essential for us as adults to present as positive role models for our youth,” said Taupier for the presentation. “Our young people receive a lot of messaging about alcohol being the solution to the stress or as the only means to have fun. It is vital that we display behavior that counters that messaging and demonstrates healthy means of managing stress and enjoying ourselves”.

Today, 20 organizations and six coalitions participate in Raising the Bar to transform our community environment. Participating youth organizations include sports associations, sports clubs, sports leagues, community recreation departments, high schools and high school districts throughout Marin County. Local coalitions include Marin Healthy Youth Partnerships, West Marin Coalition for Healthy Youth, Marin City STRIKE Coalition, Alcohol Justice, North Marin Community Services and Novato Coalition.

Lisa Klein, of Corte Madera, is a mom of two daughters and assistant project coordinator for Marin Healthy Youth Partnerships. To learn more about Raising the Bar and other prevention programs and partners, please email Lisa@MHYP.org.