

# Getting perspective on your community

Alcohol advertisements are everywhere: on television, radio and in magazines, at the corner store, gas stations and big box stores. Over time, the constant barrage of images is part of the landscape.

April is Alcohol Awareness month, promoted by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence for the past 25 years. This month, Communities That Care of Lorain County encourages you to become more aware of alcohol's presence in your community. Take an informal survey. Where are alcohol ads in your community? How much space do retailers devote to selling alcohol? How is alcohol use portrayed on television shows, in movies and literature? What are celebrities, athletes and other role models saying about alcohol? And, what happens to them because of alcohol? (Actions do speak louder than words).

Look around your neighborhood, your community. A few years ago, our coal-

ition asked youth to do the same. We armed them with disposable cameras. They were sent off with the assignment: Show us what it's like to live in Lorain County. We received dozens of pictures with abandoned homes, graffiti, bars, ads for cigarettes and liquor. Day after day, this is what youth see on their way back and forth to school.

As adults, we seem to become immune to the messaging. The Camera Project opened our eyes. We are starting to look at our communities and county in a different light. We are asking ourselves, what are we willing to accept in our own backyards? We can make an impact. We're starting to encourage businesses to include alternative signage, such as, We Don't Serve to Teens; 21 is the Legal Drinking Age; Parents Who Host Lose the Most: don't be a party to teenage drinking.

There's much more that can be done. Our coalition wants to partner with residents, communities, school and agencies to reduce underage drinking. Advertising

and messaging is just one way to make a change in your community. We're here to help make that happen.

And this month, we're hoping you can increase your awareness by attending a free Town Hall Meeting on the dangers of serving alcohol to minors; it's illegal, dangerous and costly. The Town Hall will be held from

6-8 p.m. at Faith Ministries, 1306 Euclid Ave. in Lorain; it's sponsored by the coalition's STOP Task Force, which is focused specifically on underage drinking. We're looking forward to seeing you there.

For more information, contact Communities That Care of Lorain County: 440-282-9920.

