

The following letter was sent to the Iowa City Press Citizen, Des Moines Register, Daily Iowan and Cedar Rapids Gazette:

At its Board meeting on October 26, 2007, the University of Iowa Parent Association Advisory Board passed a unanimous resolution in favor of the proposed Iowa City ordinance which will be on the ballot on November 6 and if passed would limit access to city bars after 10:00pm only to those of legal drinking age. As parents, we have become increasingly alarmed by the excessive consumption of alcohol and by the culture of alcohol which has become pervasive in Iowa City. The students' self reporting, the Princeton review, the data on the increase in binge drinking, and the location of thirty five bars in the nine square block downtown area all support this conclusion. We send our students to Iowa City to avail themselves of the wonderful educational opportunities in a highly respected, major institution of higher learning and to experience life in a small historic Midwestern city. To our dismay, the reputation of the university and the city itself has been tarnished by the image and media reports of major alcohol abuse. The easy accessibility of alcohol to underage drinkers and the location of the thirty five bars in the nine square block area in the shadow of Old Capitol give concrete support to this image and assessment by such publications as the Princeton Review.

As parents, we do not view binge drinking and underage drinking as youthful exuberance, a rite of passage, or an essential part of the college experience. We view this behavior as harmful and destructive to our student's health and safety and to their futures. Serious physical injury to self and others, psychological trauma, lost educational opportunities, and criminal charges can all result from excessive drinking. In this age of comprehensive background checks, an arrest record for underage drinking or public intoxication can quickly derail a student's future career choices or employment opportunities, and the hard earned dollars that parents are investing in the student's university education can be wasted.

Obviously excessive alcohol use is a problem which requires a comprehensive approach. The university has initiated an Alcohol Education program, and a major new recreational facility is being constructed. As a parent board, we are anxious to promote a healthy lifestyle, and we believe that limiting access to those of legal drinking age in Iowa City's thirty five bars is a vital step in this process.

We do realize that there is a concern that underage drinking could move into private house parties in the Iowa City neighborhoods. The thought seems to be that the thirty five downtown bars are actually providing a community service by keeping the alcohol use geographically confined. We do not know of any data or study which supports this possibility. However, in our view, the current policy of allowing nineteen and twenty year olds into the thirty five bars simply suggests enabling behavior rather than dealing with it.

We applaud the citizens of Iowa City who have struggled to get this proposed ordinance on the ballot, and we are committed to support additional programs and plans the university may implement in the future. As responsible adults, we cannot look the other way at the statistics, surveys, and behaviors which have become so evident and so alarming and at the easy accessibility of alcohol in the thirty five bars.

Accordingly, the Parent Advisory Board strongly and emphatically supports a "yes" vote on the November 6 ballot on the ordinance to limit access to the thirty five bars after 10:00pm only to those students of legal drinking age.

Mary Hughes, President, St. Charles, Ill
David Hughes, St. Charles, Ill
Cindy Arter, Bettendorf, Iowa
Luanne and Joseph Alemao
Michael and Susan Bates, Arlington Heights, Ill
Meri Beth Kennedy, Burnsville, Minnesota
Mary Beth Golemo, Ames, Iowa
Jim and Carolyn Lipcamon, Council Bluff, Iowa
Steve and Karla Maxwell, Dubuque, Iowa
John and Ruth Hairston, Cedar Rapids, Iowa