

By taking an honest look at the dangers of drinking too young and staying relevant to their audience, Own Up promises to make a lasting difference.



Recently developed through collaboration between the Beverage Alcohol Community Information Council (BACIC) and the Governor's Office of Highway Safety, the Own Up campaign is changing how underage drinking is discussed through newly updated approaches. The campaign not only seeks to educate young adults but parents, teachers and those who serve alcohol as well. Chairman of BACIC, Steve Chucri, explains how the phrase "own up" came to serve as the title for the new program. "There are so many things that can occupy the minds of teenagers today. What we are trying to say to them is 'Look, kids, I know you have a lot going on. We know that there are, in your mind, ways to relieve that pressure and attention, and one way might be to turn to underage drinking; but remember, you have to own up to your responsibility and more importantly your future. Because one careless mistake as a teenager can carry with you for the rest of your life.'"

It is not uncommon for campaigns to become outdated overtime, eventually forced to the level of cliché with ignored messages. When teenagers hear the same old story of following the law and being safe, eyes roll upward and snide jokes are used to weaken the importance of the message. Own Up hopes to avoid losing its ability to change attitudes and strives to secure a permanent position as a repository for education, prevention and awareness.

With the use of social media, particularly popular sites like Facebook, Own Up hopes to engage the community and maintain public interest. "It's a new day," says Chucri, "as technology is advancing. Own Up is going to be able to adapt and keep its attention because we are going to continue to evolve and make sure that it's going to be cutting edge." Own Up doesn't just stop online either. The campaign plans on participating in school assemblies, sponsoring alcohol-free events, encouraging the use of designated drivers, and enlisting local businesses, like popular restaurants, to get involved in spreading awareness.

This past June, Rebecca Blaser, an 18-year-old graduate of Seton Catholic Prep in Chandler, won an essay contest held by the campaign. Her submission urged readers not to risk their lives and futures at the hands of alcohol and why she is choosing to wait until 21 for her first drink. "I think Own Up is doing a good job about spreading the word and actually making people aware of it. If people know that the people around them aren't drinking, not partying and stuff for fun, then maybe they will start doing that too."

*Story by Victoria Fouts*

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Read Becca Blaser's winning essay at [AZFoothills.com](http://AZFoothills.com)