



The Extra Mile

Advocating for evidence-based policies and practices to prevent and reduce alcohol-related harms



Year in Review

Celebrating our accomplishments and looking forward to 2025



We want to express our deep and heartfelt gratitude for your continuing support of our mission of *advocating for evidence-based policies and practices to prevent alcohol-related harms*. Our success wouldn't be possible without you!

Enforcement: Over the past year, Project Extra Mile has collaborated with 11 law enforcement agencies to conduct alcohol-focused enforcement operations, who cited 41 (11%) businesses for selling alcohol to minors. The results of these and past underage drinking enforcements can be found on [our website](#). Our website also lists the [administrative penalties](#) imposed by the Liquor Control Commission for these sales.

The organization also supported Douglas County DUI Task Force operations to remove impaired drivers from our roads resulting in 44 citations, including 8 DUIs (7 first offense & 1 second offense); refuse alcohol test (1); refuse breath test (1); open container (1); and MIP (1).

Other enforcement efforts included:

- The March 2024 law enforcement training focused on responding to an underage party in which 14 Omaha area youth assisted by pretending they were at the party drinking.
- The organization advocated for expanded enforcement to prevent binge drinking and its harms.



Youth Leadership: PEM's Youth Leadership Network continued to advocate for increasing the price of alcohol. Over the past year, students traveled to Lincoln for a Leadership Day that saw them meet with four senators and the Governor's office to advocate for evidence-based policies to prevent alcohol-related harms. Due to the youth's efforts in meeting with senators, Senator John Lowe (Kearney) introduced an interim study to examine alcohol pricing and taxation in Nebraska. The governor also included a proposal to quadruple the excise tax on spirits in his property tax proposal after his staff met with our youth and hearing their concerns over cheap alcohol and the harms they see in their communities.

During the summer, 14 youth from across the state came together for a two-day youth leadership retreat in Omaha. The students learned about excessive alcohol consumption and its harms, evidence-based policies, the importance of mental health, what it takes to be a leader, and advocacy.

Three youth leaders were recognized for their engagement in the Youth Leadership Network: Rylee Loontjer, Saral Sapkota, and Fiona Wagner. Saral was named the Project Extra Mile Youth Leadership Scholar for 2024 and received the organization's \$1,000 scholarship to help continue his education after he graduates in 2025.

The Youth Leadership Network is open to youth in the Omaha area and meets once a month at the UNO Community Engagement Center. Youth entering 8th-12th grades are welcome to join at any time. To learn more, visit our [website](#).



Policy Initiatives: During the 2024 legislative session, a bill requiring liquor licensees to separate alcoholic products from non-alcoholic products containing the same or similar brand name, logo, or packaging was signed into law. PEM, community members, and the Youth Leadership Network students expressed their support for this measure to protect youth from alcoholic products that target them. In addition, PEM, the Monument Prevention Coalition, and 26 other community members and youth opposed the sale of alcohol at University of Nebraska sporting events.

Please consider lending your voice to advocate for proven strategies to reduce alcohol-related harms in our state. There is power in numbers and the alcohol industry is well funded and well represented when it comes to lobbying our government. Our policy work group meets 1-2 times per year – the time commitment is minimal and the impact you can have is great! To join our contact list, please [fill out this form](#).

Media Advocacy: During the year, PEM had 14 pieces of earned (unpaid) media. Engaging the media helps us educate the public and builds public support for evidence-based policies that are often challenging to implement.

Education and Awareness: PEM organized community trainings focused on 1) the problem of underage drinking and its solutions and 2) explaining the liquor licensing process and opportunities for citizen engagement to help keep neighborhoods safe. The organization presented this information to public health professionals at both the Nebraska Public Health Conference in Lincoln, NE and nationally at the Alcohol Policy 20 Conference in Arlington, VA.



Technical Assistance: The organization provided technical assistance on several occasions to over 30 community members, faith-based organizations, and other coalitions. Topics included problem liquor outlets, the liquor licensing process, successful implementation of alcohol retail compliance checks, mandatory service training for those serving alcohol.

Project Extra Mile to Help National Effort to Better Understand the Alcohol Retail Environment

Help us reach our goal of visiting 100 businesses in the Omaha area



Project Extra Mile was selected to participate in the Counter Tools [Retail Alcohol Data \(RAD\) Collaborative](#). This is a national research project to help individuals and groups better understand

alcohol availability, pricing, and marketing that is particularly dangerous and/or appeals to youth. Local coalitions around the country will collect data which will then be analyzed to provide tools that empower communities to advocate for alcohol-related policy changes. Data collection will run between January 10 through February 28, 2025. PEM's Youth Leadership Network will utilize their monthly meetings to visit businesses to collect data but they cannot do this alone! Please email Liene Topko (liene@projectextramile.org) to volunteer to help collect this data at locations you already frequent.

Research Briefs: Excessive Alcohol Consumption and Related Harms Continue to Plague Our Communities

A [new study](#) was released in November indicating that deaths from alcohol-related diseases have more than doubled among Americans between 1999 and 2020. In 1999, there were 19,356 alcohol-related deaths compared to 48,870 in 2020. Researchers found significant increases in individuals aged 25 to 34 (3.8-fold increase); women (2.5-fold), Asians and Pacific Islanders (2.4-fold); and the Midwest (2.5-fold). With that said, it is important to note that deaths from alcohol-related disease are just a fraction of all alcohol-related deaths. According to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), the United States experiences 178,307 alcohol-attributable deaths annually. These include various diseases as well as acute causes such as motor vehicle crashes, suicide, homicide, and other causes.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic hit the world and began the unraveling of various alcohol policies. A [new study](#) was conducted to look at trends in alcohol use after the height of the pandemic. They analyzed whether increased alcohol consumption has continued and whether public policy and health care initiatives could mitigate alcohol-related morbidity and mortality. The researchers found that there was an absolute increase in alcohol use between 2018, 2020 (2.69% increase), and 2022 (2.96% increase). An increase was also seen in heavy alcohol use in 2020 (1.03%) and in 2022 (1.18%). These increases show that alcohol-related public health effects may still remain from the pandemic. Researchers indicated that potential causes for the increase may include normalization and adaptation of increased consumption as well as disrupted

Coalition Recap

The November 13th coalition meeting featured the [Nebraska Tribes Addressing Violence \(NETAV\) Coalition](#), which is working to support and strengthen the prevention of and response to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, elder abuse, dating violence, and human trafficking against Native Americans in the state of Nebraska through education, trainings, support, public awareness, and technical assistance in order to promote safety for both rural and urban tribal communities. Executive Director Kirby Williams shared that more than 4 in 5 (84.3%) American Indian and Alaska Native women and men experience violence in their lifetime and that perpetrators are almost always non-Native – to the tune of 97% of cases for Native women and 90% of cases for Native men.

She shared that there are high numbers of Native children in the foster care system; suicide rates among Native people are more than 3.5 times higher than other race/ethnicity groups; and that Native Americans have some of the highest rates of substance abuse among persons 12 or older. To address these issues, the NETAV coalition 1) supports tribal domestic violence programs to provide technical assistance, resource networking, and training; 2) educates tribal communities on dating violence, elder abuse, and healthy/unhealthy relationships; 3) advocates for safer tribal communities through increased resource; and 4) trains non-Native communities on how to best collaborate with Native American survivors of violence.

Youth Corner:

Written by Vyshnavi Perisetla, sophomore at Millard North High School

Almost a year ago, I turned fifteen and began learning how to drive. At first, gripping the wheel felt overwhelming—my stomach shaking with each turn, my heart racing as I merged into traffic. But now, as my sixteenth birthday approaches, I feel ready for the freedom and independence that come with a license. Yet, beneath that excitement, my fear of encountering a drunk driver always remains present. No matter how careful or focused I am, someone else's reckless actions could change everything in a moment.

More than 178,000 people die each year as a result of excessive alcohol consumption, and drunk drivers are often at the heart of these tragedies. For new drivers like me, the risks feel especially concerning. Without the reflexes of experienced drivers, the thought of encountering someone who's swerved onto the wrong side of the road or blown through a stoplight is terrifying. It's not just an unprompted fear—it's a reality I'm reminded of every time I hear about an alcohol-related crash. These stories hit too close to home, making me wonder if I'll be lucky enough to avoid such danger.

Behind the physical dangers, this reality places an emotional toll on youth. The thought that my safety could be compromised by someone else's behavior is overwhelming. It's unfair that something so exciting, like learning to drive, carries the shadow of anxiety and helplessness. Every tragic story about teens losing friends or loved ones to drunk drivers feels like a warning, a reminder of how someone's irresponsible decision could shatter lives in a heartbeat.

Driving should be about freedom, not fear. I hope adults understand the immense power they hold—not just over their own lives, but over the lives of people like me who are just beginning this journey. We depend on them to make choices that prioritize safety, not just for themselves but for everyone on the road. Their decisions can ensure that driving is a milestone filled with hope and independence, not fear and uncertainty.

Please Join Us!

Holiday

Coalition Meeting

Wednesday, December 11, 2024

UNO's Community Engagement Center

Room 209

9:00 a.m.



CELEBRATING
25
YEARS
1995-2020

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For more information: 402-963-9047



30 Years
projectextramile
1995-2025
PREVENTING ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM

Meetings are held at
UNO's Community Engagement Center
6400 University Drive South



2025 Meeting Dates

January 22nd

February 12th

Join us at our
**30th Anniversary
Recognition Dinner
on March 12th**

April 9th

May 14th

June 11th

No Meeting in July

August 13th

September 10th

October 8th

November 12th

December 10th



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