

Giving parents info about college drinking is good idea

Free Press editorial

Minnesota State Mankato has initiated some good programs to combat binge drinking. The University of Minnesota has a new program that warrants emulation, The Free Press editorializes: Classes for parents about student drinking.

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The story usually starts the same: After a night of heavy drinking, a college student goes missing for several days.

And, regrettably, the story ends the same: The student is found sometimes much later, having drowned or fallen into some other tragic situation.

Colleges now are turning their attention to combating the problem. A few years ago Minnesota State University implemented a peer-oriented campaign called 411 to give students knowledge about drinking. The advertising campaign helped destroy the myth that everyone on a college campus was drinking. The MSU campaign was a good start.

Now, a University of Minnesota campaign goes one step further and offers another step in the right direction. The U of M is working to get parents involved in the issue. Organizers correctly assess that parents have a good deal of influence over their college-age children and armed with a little information could talk to them about excessive drinking.

The U of M has provided an online class about college drinking and so far about 225 parents have taken it. The online class doesn't suggest temperance, but it offers parents a reality check on trends in college drinking and urges them to talk to their kids.

Campus surveys show the parents could play a significant role in perhaps not prohibiting their kids from drinking, but at least making them aware about the deadly issue of excessive drinking. Surveys show college students talk to their parents about once a day.

Many parents know their kids are going to drink at college, but officials say many do not know the extent to which they are influenced to drink heavily. Some college-town bars, including some in Mankato, market all-you-can drink specials that encourage excessive drinking.

Parents need to be made aware of the deals one can get on drinks in a college town.

Surveys show students drink for a variety of reasons, some of which are attached to the need to "break the ice" and socialize.

Some colleges, including MSU, are providing social venues that don't involve drinking. Those programs also represent a good start.

Excessive drinking by college students and the tragedies that result are problems that can be solved more effectively and possibly even more efficiently with prevention instead of detention. Parents can be a big help.