

## **North City Prevention Coalition**

North City Prevention Coalition is a nonprofit organization that serves as a resource for community specific and culturally relevant outreach, education and prevention. We work collaboratively with community members, leaders and legislative bodies on behalf of safe and healthy communities that support alcohol- and drug-free choices for youth.

### **NEWS RELEASE**

#### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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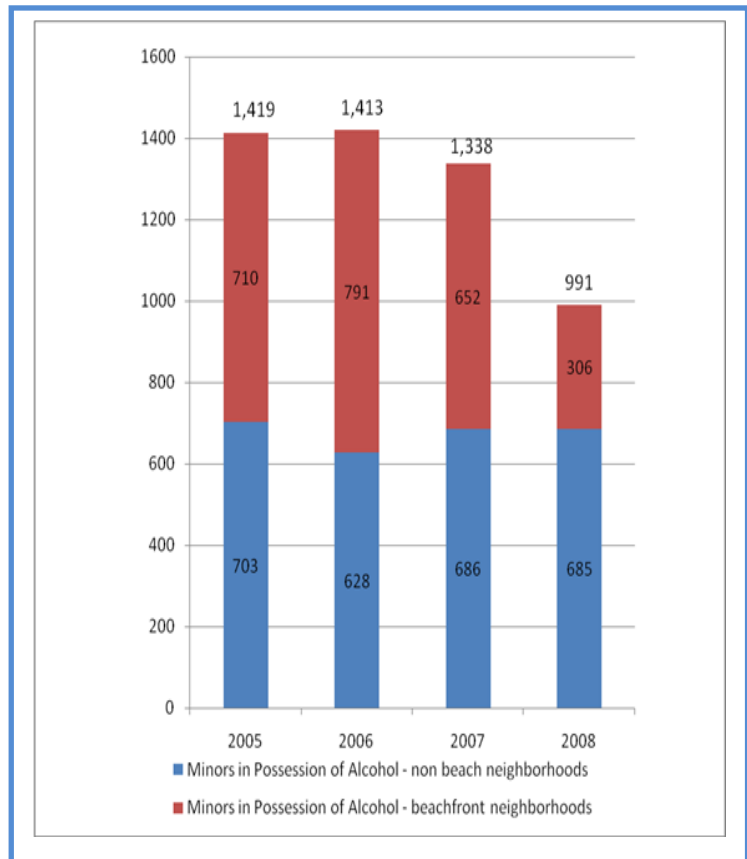
# **UNDERAGE DRINKING CITATIONS DROP 29 PERCENT IN SAN DIEGO**

## ***FIRST YEAR OF ALCOHOL-FREE BEACHES YIELDS STUNNING RESULTS***

**(San Diego)** Thanks to the alcohol-free policy on San Diego City Beaches, underage drinking citations have been reduced by 29 percent citywide, according to police data.

“For three years before the beaches went alcohol-free, police wrote about 1,400 citations every year to minors in possession of alcohol,” said Kathleen Lippitt of North City Prevention Coalition. “But last year, that number dropped to less than one thousand. The difference was the alcohol-free beach rule.”

Police data show that seven neighborhoods adjacent to city beaches had a total of 411 fewer minor in possession (M.I.P.) citations last year. In most other parts of the city, the number of M.I.P.’s remained constant.



“We expected to see some positive changes when the beaches went alcohol-free,” said Monica Green, a Pacific Beach resident who supported the ballot measure that made the beach alcohol ban permanent last November.

“In the beach area, underage drinking is a major concern even though it rarely makes headlines,” Green said.

How bad was it? Every year, police caught more than 400 underage drinkers in Mission Beach and Mission Bay Park. And P.B’s beachfront averaged 200 violations annually. Ocean Beach, with about 30 M.I.P.’s per year, seemed tame by comparison, but it was still six times worse than the citywide average for San Diego neighborhoods.

## 2008—A Year of Change

When San Diego City Beaches went alcohol-free in January of 2008, some changes were immediate.

Fewer drinkers on the sand meant fewer distractions for lifeguards as they focused on the water. Police got positive comments from tourists and residents about how friendly and laid-back the beaches had become. There was less trash on the beach, and the boardwalk no longer smelled like stale beer and urine.

### **Seven Key Beachfront Neighborhoods- Underage Drinking Violations, 2008:**

- Pacific Beach (P.B. Drive to Chalcedony) - **Down 79%**
- Pacific Beach (North of Chalcedony)-**Down 57%**
- Mission Beach/Mission Bay Park-**Down 56%**
- North Ocean Beach - **Down 45%**
- Ocean Beach - **Down 18%**
- Up 3% in the La Jolla Shores/Torrey Pines area
- Up 41% in La Jolla, between Palomar and Pearl Streets

These improvements were apparent right away, but it took a year’s worth of data to understand how the beach booze ban impacted underage drinking on the sand, and citywide.

“Before the ban, teenagers from all over San Diego could get alcohol at the beaches,” said Lippitt. “Some beaches looked like open bars, packed with drinkers. Kegs, drinking games and beer bong made the beach seem more like a frat party than a public park. In that atmosphere, a teenager felt pressure to drink.”

“On any sunny day, police faced the challenge of picking minors out from thousands of people drinking on the sand,” added Lippitt.

## Areas with the Biggest Changes

Police have released the underage drinking statistics for 2008, and the reduction in those violations is dramatic.

When ranked by underage drinking citations, beachfront neighborhoods occupy seven of the top fifteen spots on the list. In most of those seven beach areas, underage drinking violations dropped off sharply.

Along Pacific Beach's main section of beach, underage drinking violations dropped by an astonishing 79 percent last year, compared to the previous three years. Northern Pacific Beach's underage drinking violations fell by 57 percent. In Mission Beach and Mission Bay Park, there was a 56 percent drop. The North O.B. neighborhood near Dog Beach had a 45 percent drop in underage drinking violations, while central Ocean Beach had an 18 percent drop.

In the seven beachfront neighborhoods with the most underage drinking violations, those violations dropped by 57 percent overall during 2008. And because those areas were magnets for underage drinkers from all over San Diego, underage drinking arrests and citations fell by 29 percent citywide.

"When teenagers are surrounded by heavy drinking, they're more likely to drink," said Lippitt. "By getting alcohol off the beaches, we've reduced the environments that contribute to underage drinking. And less underage drinking now means fewer problems in the future; problems like drunken driving and alcohol dependence. The alcohol-free beach rule has already made San Diego a safer and healthier city, and it will pay dividends far into the future."

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