

## *Talk It Up! Column*

### **Responsible Changes in Hillsborough's Retail Community**

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Every month, Orange Partnership for Alcohol and Drug Free Youth (OP) regularly writes a column in *New of Orange*, as an educational service to the Orange County community, about some aspect of youth substance use prevention. However, rarely do we talk about ourselves and our efforts in the community. As a finale to 2018, we'd like to take this chance to do so! We also want to take this chance to highlight some amazing community work and partners.

As a quick refresher, OP is a partnership between community members, youth, parents, various agencies, schools and organizations in Hillsborough and rural Orange County concerned about the issue of underage drinking and drug use. Using an environmental perspective, we address youth access to alcohol, policy enforcement, youth empowerment and social norms. As part of this work, OP conducts Alcohol Purchase Surveys (APS), which involve sending someone over the age of 21 (but who appears younger, usually around 18 or 19) into local stores to attempt to purchase alcohol without an ID. In addition, OP supports the Hillsborough Police Department's compliance operations. Results of APS, along with compliance data, are used to identify trends and act as a guide for which locations may benefit from further support and staff training. Our goal is to create a business community that is successful in keeping our youth safe, as well as being economically successful.

A few years ago, OP began an initiative to recognize the stores in our county that go above and beyond to stay in compliance and keep alcohol out of the hands of underage youth. Each year, a local retailer is awarded the Responsible Retailer of the Year Award by the mayor at a Town of Hillsborough Board meeting. Winners receive a plaque and banner, as well as social media recognition from Orange Partnership and their partners. Prior winners have included Weaver Street Market, Lloyd's Citgo and Quickie Mart. This year, we were excited to announce that the winner is Circle K #818 on Churton St. We'd like to thank these stores for their outstanding efforts to conduct responsible alcohol sales, their commitment to keeping the youth of our community safe and healthy, and for consistently checking identification for alcohol purchases. And we encourage you to stop by and show your gratitude as well, by giving them your thanks and business!

Relatedly, we'd like to share some fantastic strides that the retailers of our community as a whole have made since we began APS in 2012. The first time OP did an Alcohol Purchase Survey, only 30% of stores checked for identification. This means that 70% of all stores in Hillsborough and northern Orange County were NOT asking for ID before selling alcohol. By consistently checking stores through APS, providing feedback to stores when they passed or failed a survey, and training for staff on best practices in checking ID, retailers in Orange County are, as of this year, passing at a 93% rate! That means that, now, only 7% of stores are NOT checking ID before selling alcohol. This is such a phenomenal change in local norms and we could not be prouder of or happier with our retail community on their efforts in making this happen.

Orange Partnership envisions a community where young people live safe, healthy and productive lives free from alcohol and drugs. And we love the ability to share great news like this, about our successes towards reaching this goal, with the community. And on that uplifting note, Happy New Year to everyone!