

Family Fun Night is a fixture in community-based effort to reduce underage alcohol use

AT A GLANCE

Alcohol-free community events like Family Fun Night are reducing risk factors for underage drinking and reducing youth alcohol consumption.

The Situation

According to the Center for Disease Control, alcohol is the most used drug by people under the age of 21 in the United States. 7.2% of Idaho youth aged 12-17 reported drinking alcohol in the last 30 days, which is slightly higher than the national average. The Idaho Office of Drug Policy states that youth that drink alcohol have an increased risk of alcohol-related problems in adulthood, suppression of brain development, a higher likelihood of death and a greater risk of sexual assault. Reducing underage drinking is critical to improving the lives of rural Idaho youth.

Our Response

The University of Idaho Extension office in Lemhi County and the Salmon Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition has been using a community-based approach to reduce underage drinking. Building community and family support can reduce risk factors that increase the likelihood that youth may misuse alcohol according to the National Library of Medicine. An alcohol-free community event that focuses on family can aid in population level reduction in underage alcohol use. Population level reduction is a public health strategy that lowers disease risk or harmful exposures across an entire community or society by changing structural and



A bird's eye view of Family Fun Night in 2024. Photo by Curt Esterholt.

environmental conditions rather than focusing on single patients. Since 2007, UI Extension has been hosting Family Fun Night, an alcohol-free family carnival that raises awareness of underage drinking and provides community support for alcohol-free events for youth. In its 18th year, Family Fun Night continues to grow into a fixture in the community and at the Lemhi County Fair. Few community activities in Lemhi County are alcohol-free.

Program Outcomes

In 2025, the event had over 1,000 youth and adults in attendance. Fifty-four adult attendees completed a written survey. Most people surveyed brought their children or grandchildren to the event. Of those surveyed, 98% felt that family-friendly, alcohol-free

events like Family Fun Night are very important. 83% of respondents stated the event provides a safe alternative to drinking alcohol for youth. Most respondents (94 %) stated the event provides a way to show support for alcohol-free events in the community and a place where the community can come together without alcohol. Family Fun Night was reported to also provide awareness about underage alcohol use from 75% of those surveyed.

According to the National Library of Medicine there are five risk factors that increase youth and young adult alcohol use. Two of those five risk factors, negative family experiences and negative neighborhood

experiences, are addressed with Family Fun Night. Negative family and neighborhood experiences put youth at greater risk for using alcohol and reducing these risks are effective in reducing population level youth alcohol use. Family Fun Night provides a family environment free of alcohol, reduces alcohol availability and normalizes alcohol-free community events.

Cooperators and Co-Sponsors

- Salmon Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition
Salmon's Drug Free Youth

FOR MORE INFORMATION

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