



The Extra Mile

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

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

Fred Zwonechek

FEBRUARY 2, 1947 - OCTOBER 28, 2024

It is with deep sadness that we share that our long-time friend, partner, and board member has died unexpectedly. Fred was a friend and champion of our work over many decades, since the inception of Project Extra Mile nearly 30 years ago. His impact on the success of our work can't be overstated. His voice will be sorely missed.

Celebration of Life: Friday, November 15, 2024 at 2:00 p.m.
Butherus, Maser & Love Funeral Home, 4040 A Street, Lincoln, NE

[Click here to read the full obituary](#)

A circular portrait of Fred Zwonechek, a middle-aged man with dark hair, wearing a dark suit, white shirt, and a striped tie. The portrait is set against a blue background with gold floral decorations in the corners.

Miles to Go: University of Nebraska Regents Vote for Alcohol at Memorial Stadium

Vote permits alcohol sales at all NU sporting events across three campuses

The University of Nebraska Board of Regents opened the door for alcohol sales at Memorial Stadium on February 11, 2022 when they [voted to lift the 1999 ban on alcohol sales](#) on university property. Slowly but surely, the rules have been rolled back to allow incremental steps towards expanding alcohol access at sporting events. These steps have included the Big 10 wrestling tournament (2/2022), sales at Pinnacle Bank Arena (9/2022) and Haymarket Park (4/2024), as

well as at special events like the Garth Brooks concert (8/2021) and Volleyball Day (6/2023), both of which occurred at Memorial Stadium. On [October 4th, the regents voted 7-1](#) to permit alcohol sales at all University of Nebraska sporting events across its three campuses. The decision to sell alcohol at those venues will be up to each campus, but it has been confirmed that alcohol will be sold during the 2025 football season at Memorial Stadium. It was the culmination of a well-thought-out plan to demonstrate that alcohol could be sold at these venues with university officials simultaneously hoping that no tragic loss of life could be traced back to alcohol sales.

During the hearing, five people spoke against the matter, including Project Extra Mile Executive Director Chris Wagner and Lanette Richards, executive director of Monument Prevention Coalition in Scottsbluff. The Regents also received 26 written comments in opposition to allowing alcohol sales at all sporting events. **No one testified in favor of adding alcohol sales.** Concerns addressed sales to minors and to intoxicated fans, as well as concerns for the general safety and wellbeing of the community when impaired drivers are leaving the stadium. Wagner asked that the vote be delayed due to lack of transparency about how alcohol sales would be implemented. The Board of Regents voted 7-1 with Regent Wilmont opposing the change. [Click here to view PEM's testimony.](#)



The university has emphasized that events that have allowed the sale of alcohol have not brought about any “major” issues. Yet after the Garth Brooks concert at Memorial Stadium in 2021, a Lincoln resident [shared with the Lincoln Journal Star](#) that this was “one of the drunkest nights I ever saw in Lincoln.” Regents and NU President Jeffrey Gold also repeatedly referenced a [study conducted by the University of Iowa](#) after alcohol sales were introduced at Kinnick Stadium. This “study” is not a peer reviewed study in a scientific journal based on years of data, but rather an observational study done by University of Iowa staff. However, the study did offer interesting insights. One of the main reasons Nebraska officials supported adding alcohol sales was to “enhance the fan experience.” Yet, the Iowa study noted that attendance decreased once alcohol was added to Kinnick Stadium and only 6% of fans listed alcohol as contributing to a positive game day experience while 30% of fans listed alcohol/drunken behavior as a negative.

In the end, the Iowa study committee concluded that it could not definitively say that alcohol pilot was either a success or a failure but that it would require further study. In other words, the study was much ado about nothing and did not address key factors such as changes in alcohol enforcement.

Miles to Go: Hook, Line, & Sinker: Liquor Control Commission Reduces Bar's Penalty for Selling to Minors

Alcohol compliance checks were conducted in Douglas County on May 29th to ensure businesses are not selling alcohol to minors. During the operations, 12 of 72 (17%) businesses were cited for selling alcohol to underage youth. Havana Garage (1008 Howard Street, Omaha, 68102), was cited for its second violation within one year which, according to the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission's (LCC) [penalty guidelines](#), means they were facing a penalty of 2 days mandatory closure (no alcohol sales) and 50 days suspension that could be paid off as a fine of \$100/day.

The business chose to contest the charge and appeared before the LCC on October 8th for a formal hearing represented by counsel. The Cooperating Individual (CI) testified that he and a female partner went into the business and sat at the bar. They then ordered two beers from a waitress and were not asked for identification. After being served and paying for the alcohol, the CIs texted the officers who then came in to process the violation. The business' attorney argued that the CI did not take possession of the alcohol because “he

didn't look at it" or hold it in his hand, despite the CI indicating during his testimony that he did hold it. Hobert Rupe, LCC executive director and hearing officer, clarified that the LCC has never gone down the route that you have to take physical possession. He stated, "The commission has always been that if it's ordered and put in front of you and paid for, you now have constructive possession of it." The attorney proceeded to show a video clip from security cameras that showed the interaction but cut off as the CIs were paying for the beers.

The commissioners unanimously found the business guilty; however, when it came to the penalty, Chairman Bruce Bailey made a motion to cut the penalty in half to one day of mandatory closure and 25 days of suspension, which was seconded by Commissioner Kim Lowe after a long pause of silence. Commissioner Harry Hoch voted against the penalty recommendation. Bailey justified this discount based on the incomplete video provided by the attorney and that they've taken steps such as training all employees and ID scanners on employees' phones, but this decision ignores some key realities. First, the video didn't prove anything. It only captured part of the transaction (coincidentally, the part that possibly helped the business but not the last half of the compliance check that would've shown the minor possessing the alcohol and paying for it). Second, the LCC regularly requires training when a business fails a compliance check. Just because the business claims to have completed this prior to the sentencing does not warrant such a significant penalty discount.

Project Extra Mile commended the commission for its recent decision to increase its penalty guidelines for sales to minor and remove the 2-day suspension discount (\$100-200) it had been giving to businesses that checked the minor's ID but sold anyway, which is what makes this decision even more baffling. Think about how much money this business will save by only being forced to stop selling alcohol for one day instead of four days in addition to the \$2,500 in fines they will save by having the days of suspension cut in half.

The LCC is essentially telling retailers that they can bring doctored video to the LCC, make absurd arguments about possession, sell alcohol to minors, and get a significant discount on a serious violation – one that can lead to serious injury or death in an uncontrolled environment. It's hard to argue that the Commission takes these violations seriously when we have [22 Nebraska youth dying from underage drinking every year](#) (page 3).

Coalition Recap



During the October 9th coalition meeting, Jeff Curry, Chief Probation Officer with the [Lancaster County DUI Court](#), shared information about how the DUI Court is helping to decrease impaired driving. The pilot program was established in June 2021 and has graduated 53 participants since then. To qualify, individuals must have received a 3rd or 4th felony DUI offense and

been ordered by the county attorney to attend after completing an alcohol evaluation.

The five-phase program takes approximately 18-21 months for individuals to complete. Participants undergo daily alcohol testing, weekly drug testing, and must also attend treatment and AA meetings. If participants are late or miss testing, there are progressive penalties including incarceration and dismissal from the program. Because participants have already pleaded guilty to the DUI as a condition of participation, any failure to adequately participate will result in their sentence taking immediate effect. Curry explained that a majority of participants have jobs and families, so the court works with them to establish remote testing as well as interlock devices to ensure they are able to keep their

employment while successfully completing the program.

Youth Corner:

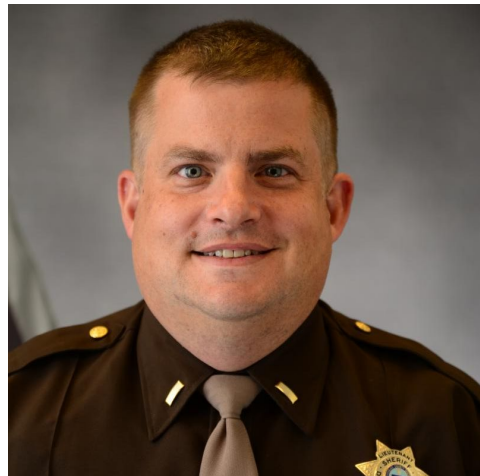
Written by King Maxwell, sophomore at Creighton Preparatory School

I am 16 years old, I live in Nebraska, I am kind, I am helpful, and I care about others. Those are positive traits of me, King Maxwell. What positive traits does alcohol have? None. It is simply a beverage that can kill people if it is overly consumed. According to the [National Highway Traffic Safety Administration](#), "Every day, about 37 people in the United States die in drunk-driving crashes - that's one person every 39 minutes". One person every 39 minutes dies, that number is unfathomable. We could prevent 37 people from dying each day if we limited the easy access to alcoholic products. I drive a car to and from school every day, and then I go to school-related events that keep me out until 10 p.m. sometimes. To know that I could be one of those 37 people that die each day frightens me. People die, and I know and it's a sad fact of life. But even if we can't question death, we can question how that death happens and then create a solution to prevent it from happening. That solution could be set in place by the Nebraska Legislature.

The potential solution to this problem is to increase the taxes on alcohol to reduce the amount of alcohol being bought. We as a state haven't had a major tax increase on alcohol products in over 20 years, and that is a problem. This increase was brought up, introduced, deliberated over, and denied during the special legislative session. But we won't give up because society should not have to live in fear of being hit by a drunk driver on a daily basis. As stated in the beginning, alcohol doesn't have any positive traits - only negatives. It gets you drunk, it can cause your emotions to spiral in a bad way, it can lead you to commit crimes, and it can ultimately cause you to get into a serious motor vehicle crash with either major injuries or death. Some people choose to overlook driving under the influence because it doesn't directly affect them at that moment. But just like anything else, you fight for what's right even if you are not currently being affected by the problem, because in the future it could be your problem. Stepping up and speaking out may cause it to never happen. So please, do your part to advocate for this much needed change to keep you, your family, and your community safe.

Coalition Member Spotlight - Lt. Tim Owens

This month's coalition spotlight is Lt. Tim Owens with the Douglas County Sheriff's Office. Lt. Owens is originally from Iowa where he went to the University of Northern Iowa to become a history teacher. After taking a part-time job with the university police department, he chose to focus on law enforcement. He's been with the Sheriff's Office for 20 years and is currently in charge of the Community Resources Division where he oversees the Community Action Team, School Resource Officers, the K-9 teams, the Mental and Behavioral Health Unit, and Community Services and social media. He's been involved with Project Extra Mile for 10 years, and when asked what he values about the coalition, he shared, "I appreciate the resources, training, and funding to law enforcement to focus on alcohol-related crimes that pose a health and safety risk to our community." Thanks so much for all you do, Lt. Owens, we greatly appreciate your involvement in the coalition!



Please Join Us!



Policy Work Group Meeting

Wednesday, November 13, 2024
at 10:00 a.m. in Room 209

For more information: 402-963-9047



OMAHA METRO COALITION MEETING

November 13, 2024 @ 9:00AM



**UNO's Community Engagement Center
6400 University Drive South
Room 209**

**Please join us as we welcome the
Nebraska Tribes Addressing
Violence Coalition
to discuss alcohol's
impact on its work.**



More Information :
www.projectextramile.org

402-963-9047
info@projectextramile.org



**PROJECT EXTRA MILE
2024 COALITION
MEETINGS**

JANUARY 17TH
FEBRUARY 14TH
MARCH 13TH
APRIL 10TH
MAY 8TH
JUNE 12TH
NO MEETING IN JULY
AUGUST 14TH
SEPTEMBER 11TH
OCTOBER 9TH
NOVEMBER 13TH
DECEMBER 11TH

LOOKING FORWARD TO CONNECTING WITH YOU IN 2024



CELEBRATING 25 YEARS
projectextramile
PREVENTING ALCOHOL-RELATED HARM

**MEETINGS HELD AT
UNO'S COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CENTER
6400 UNIVERSITY DRIVE SOUTH**



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