



Sue Ann Says: Wisconsin needs your help to sober up

As seen in recent polls and national headlines, Wisconsin leads our nation in alcohol abuse. It was timely, then, that the recent Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation's 3rd Annual Dialogue brought together leaders in health care, business and public policy to tackle this problem head-on. We discussed difficult issues and learned from each other. And each of us pledged to move this issue forward, challenge others, and work for real change.

A few months ago, I shared with you the alarming facts about Wisconsin's drinking problem. We both know alcohol is woven into the fabric of Wisconsin culture, but it's one thing to have a beer and another to binge. Alcohol abuse has profound consequences for our physical and mental health – and that of our children. The human impact is staggering. Alcohol abuse ruins lives and tears families apart. It is responsible for more than half of Wisconsin's motor vehicle fatalities. It is the third leading cause of preventable death in our state. It is directly or indirectly involved in domestic violence, crime, accidents, suicide, unintended pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease.

Then there are the economic consequences. Wisconsin spends about \$5 billion of your tax dollars annually for the direct and indirect costs of alcohol abuse. The estimated cost in societal harm is about \$1 per drink!

There are no simple solutions, but ultimately this problem is preventable. Other states are effecting real change. Wisconsin can too. The medical and mental health community, public officials at the local and state level, law enforcement and the justice system, educators, business leaders, community activists and parents all have to climb down from their silos and work as a unified group.

We all own this problem. You too. Model for your children. Don't glamorize drinking. Don't drink and drive, and don't let friends either. By your own actions, teach your kids about safety and responsibility. Refuse to accept Wisconsin's culture of drinking.

To learn more, please visit our website at wwhf.org to see a video of the 3rd Annual Dialogue and read the white paper. Learn about the issue. Then raise your voice. Don't think for a moment that one person can't make an impact. Educate and organize others around the issue, working through your school or community organizations. Insist that local and state leaders take effective action regarding public policy. Because it all begins with a healthy woman.

Yours in good health,

Sue Ann Thompson
Founder and president
Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation

The Wisconsin Women's Health Foundation (WWHF) is a statewide non-profit organization whose mission is to help Wisconsin women and their families reach their healthiest potential. WWHF presents women's health education and outreach programs, funds women's health research, provides scholarships for women in academic medicine, and publishes resource materials. Your donations help the Foundation reach women all over Wisconsin with the information, resources and tools they need to be healthy. To make a donation or to learn more about WWHF visit www.wwhf.org or call 1-800-448-5148.