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**New Report – OUR STORES, OUR FUTURE –
Ending Unsafe Alcohol Retail Practices
Can Stop Underage Drinking Before It Starts**

**Youth for Justice Launch “Youth Action for Safe Stores” Campaign
Targeting #SanRafael “Awful Eleven”**

SAN RAFAEL, CALIFORNIA (SEPTEMBER 24, 2021) – [Alcohol Justice](https://alcoholjustice.org), Youth for Justice, and the San Rafael Alcohol and Drug Coalition held a news conference yesterday on the sidewalk in front of United Liquors at the west end of 4th Street. The event marked the release of a new report titled: [OUR STORES, OUR FUTURE – Ending Unsafe Alcohol Retail Practices Can Stop Underage Drinking Before It Starts](https://alcoholjustice.org). The report, based upon a recent survey and assessment of all San Rafael alcohol retail outlets, targeted an “Awful Eleven” for non-compliance with “Best Practices for Stores that Sell Alcohol” standards. The event launched a youth-driven campaign – “Youth Action for Safe Stores” – to encourage compliance by the offending establishments, and to seek passage of a San Rafael City Council resolution of support.



Photo by Bruce Lee Livingston

“Youth for Justice’s grassroots solution to the underage drinking problem and the dangerous behavior of Alcohol retailers in San Rafael is our youth led campaign Youth Action for Safe Stores,” stated Jeffrey Angeles, Member, San Rafael Alcohol and Drug Coalition, Co-Chair, [Youth for Justice](#). *“Our goal is to make San Rafael a safe retail environment for all youth and Latinx youth in particular.”*

- *[From the report:](#)* Among high school students in California’s Marin County, underage alcohol use remains high. 63% of high school seniors report having ever drank alcohol, 40% drinking within the last 30 days, and nearly 1 in 3 having either driven while intoxicated or been in a car with an intoxicated driver.

“The issue of underage drinking in San Rafael is at the intersection of Public Health and Social Justice,” said Dr. Jei Africa, PsyD, MSCP, CATC-V, Director of [Behavioral Health and Recovery Services](#), Marin Health and Human Services, County of Marin. *“This is particularly important to understand as the large population of Latinx youth in this city are disproportionately affected by alcohol advertisement and normalization.”*

“When we look at the San Rafael stores that have the most risk-conducive environments, the majority of them are within a mile of the major high school,” stated report co-author Carson Benowitz-Fredericks, Research Director, Alcohol Justice. *“It’s where they walk every day, it’s where they go get chips or a soda---and see all these alcopops that look just like sodas. That’s just a hurricane of messaging surrounding these kids, trying to get them to pick up a bottle.”*

- *[From the report:](#)* Environmental prevention strategies target the availability, desirability, and normalization of alcohol at the community level, in particular retail stores that sell alcohol. These strategies are demonstrably effective in reducing underage use, but are not aggressively pursued in San Rafael.

“Alcohol ads make people--including teens--want to drink. That’s the point of advertising. If ad experts didn’t make sales go up, they wouldn’t have job,” said Benowitz-Fredericks. *“So when kids walk down the block surrounded by these ads, it makes them more likely to want to drink. And that, in turn, makes Big Alcohol more money to pay their ad teams.”*

- *[From the report:](#)* Underage consumption of alcohol is both a strong predictor of problematic alcohol-use later in life and the major influence on the leading causes of preventable death among adolescents: motor vehicle collisions, suicide, and homicide.

“You’d think Marin County would be healthy, with all these playing fields, hiking trails and organic food,” added Benowitz-Fredericks. *“But it turns out our kids are drinking way more than their peers statewide. Binge drinking more, and drinking more frequently. And getting in car crashes more frequently. It is time to get alcohol sales and alcohol ads in line with the other values this county espouses.”*

- *[From the report:](#)* Existing regulations and dissuasions in San Rafael are not effective in keeping stores from engaging in dangerous retail practices.

“The San Rafael Alcohol and Drug Coalition enthusiastically supports the Youth for Justice program as they take on the influences that lead to underage drinking in San Rafael as detailed in the “Our Stores, Our Future” Report,” said Yavar Amidi, Advocacy Manager, Alcohol Justice, [San Rafael Alcohol and Drug Coalition](#). *“We are confident in their ability to create meaningful change that will make our community a healthier and safer place for youth.”*

- *[From the report:](#)* The San Rafael City Council should embrace the Best Practices for Stores that Sell Alcohol as the gold standard for healthy stores. The San Rafael Police Department should be proactive in enforcing those best practices that are mandated by law.

“[OUR STORES. OUR FUTURE – Ending Unsafe Alcohol Retail Practices Can Stop Underage Drinking Before It Starts](#) is another example of the excellent evidence-based reports that Alcohol Justice has been producing for the past 15 years,” stated Cruz Avila, newly appointed Alcohol Justice Executive Director. *“It provides not just solid policy recommendations to reduce underage exposure to alcohol in San Rafael retail outlets, but also stands as a template for higher standards that can be adopted anywhere in the country to make communities healthier and safer.”*

Sayra Soriano, Representative, [Smoke Free Marin Coalition](#), Tobacco Related Disease Control Program, Department of Health and Human Services, County of Marin commented: “On behalf of the Marin County Tobacco Control Program, we want to express our support and appreciation for Alcohol Justice, as they continually demonstrate their commitment to protect and improve the health and safety of the Latinx community in San Rafael.”

Download the report here: <https://bit.ly/3zwhhWd>



Illustration by Kane Andrade

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