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The Albuquerque Tribune (Albuquerque, NM) **Kids blitzed with booze ads.(Evening)**

The Albuquerque Tribune (Albuquerque, NM) | October 13, 2004 | [Copyright](#)

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Parents: Keep a close eye on your kids if they're fans of the TV shows "Blind Date" or "Seinfeld."

Those two shows have the highest amount of alcohol advertising seen by underage children on New Mexico television, said David Jernigan, research director at the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth at Georgetown University in Washington.

The center released a study this week that shows steady growth in the amount of alcohol advertising seen by young people under age 20.

"Every day, 7,000 kids under age 16 start drinking in this country," Jernigan said. "More than 95 percent of that is binge drinking more than five drinks at a time. That has dangerous consequences. If you start drinking before you're 15, you're four times more likely to become an alcoholic. If you start before 14, you're seven times more likely to be in an alcohol-related injury."

While kids represent about 15 percent of the national television audience, about 23 percent of the alcohol advertising is shown on programs that are predominantly watched by people under 21, Jernigan said.

On some channels, that percentage is significantly higher, he added.

The six channels with the most alcohol advertising seen by youths in New Mexico, according to Jernigan, are: BET, where 93 percent of the alcohol ads air on shows watched by a majority of kids under 20; Comedy Central, with 82.5 percent; KASA-Channel 2, with 49 percent; VH1 with 48 percent; ABC Family Channel, with 40 percent; UPN, KASY-Channel 50, with 32.7 percent.

"Seinfeld" reruns, 'South Park,' a Dave Matthews concert on VH1, Ludacris (a concert), the Winter X-Games Classix on ESPN2: Those are shows that some adults watch, but are also watched by a disproportionate number of youth," Jernigan said. "Law enforcement and schools are trying to stop underage drinking, but they basically get shouted out by this deluge of advertising."

Comcast has no control over the ads that come packaged with national programming, said John Hurley, general manager of Comcast Spotlight, the advertising arm of the company. When it takes ads from local companies, he said, they are screened several times to make sure there is no inappropriate content aimed at children.

"I've actually never been in an environment that has been so stringent," Hurley said. "On the network side, though, we can't do anything about that. We would literally have to black out the programs before we could black out the ads."

Nationally, the study found an increase of almost 90,000 alcohol ads from 2001 to 2003.

"That's very alarming," said Terry Huertaz, state executive director of Mothers Against Drunk Driving. MADD isn't opposed to alcohol advertising, just advertising aimed at underage drinkers, Huertaz added.

The major television networks have a voluntary ban on advertising hard liquor, and the liquor industry had a ban until 1996, Jernigan said.

By 2001, national cable networks were carrying 513 ads for distilled liquor products. In 2003 there were 33,126, he said.

"What's becoming most popular for underage drinkers, we think, are alcopops things like Bacardi Silver, Smirnoff Ice, Mike's Hard Lemonade," Jernigan said. "Those are fruity flavored beverages aimed at what the industry calls 'entry-level drinkers.'"

A 2003 study by the National Institute on Drug Abuse found that 55.6 percent of high school seniors have tried alcopops, he added.

Beer is still the most common alcoholic beverage among New Mexico youth, Huertaz added.

"This is a very serious problem," she said. "We know that car crashes are the leading cause of death for teens in New Mexico, and half of those are alcohol-related. Alcohol also kills 6.5 times more kids than all other illicit drugs combined."

Jernigan said he hopes the data collected by his group can be used to influence policy-makers and the industry to cut back on the ads. He also recommends that parents pay attention to alcohol advertising on

their kids watch, so they can talk to their kids about it.
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Advertisement is designed to show the product in the most positive light possible," he said. "That's fine
The AccessMyLibrary advertising network includes
for a second but now you're talking about the biggest drug problem amongst teenagers in this
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