



SIERRA VISTA THE HERALD

OUR VIEW

Drawing the line on drinking

Gov. Janet Napolitano and other state officials announced Monday that they're drawing a line in the sand over teen drinking, and they're asking parents to stand beside them.

The unveiling of this campaign by state officials comes at a time when Sierra Vista area residents are already talking about underage drinking following the deaths of three local teenagers in August — all of whom had alcohol in their systems when they died.

The idea with the "Draw the Line" campaign is to get parents to talk with kids about drinking alcohol. And state officials want parents to make sure their kids are getting the message about the dangers and consequences of this risky behavior.

Question is, will that message be reinforced? And it seems the campaign

really does need to focus on the people who are older than 21, not just the people younger than 21.

In a survey conducted last year for the Arizona Parents Commission on Drug Education and Prevention, a third of the respondents said underage drinking was acceptable under parental supervision and nearly as many said there is nothing wrong with providing alcohol to someone younger than 21 at a special occasion or a rite of passage.

This isn't acceptable to us. By allowing kids to have alcohol, parents and those older than 21 are condoning it and likely feeding a habit that will go on beyond their supervision, and they may just be getting kids into more trouble.

Parents are the biggest influence on their children. And we're glad the state is rallying parents to talk to their kids about drinking.

To do this effectively, parents need to be armed with information about alcohol abuse and must advocate — and set an example by not providing the drinks — that drinking alcohol at a young age isn't right.

Will this problem ever go away? Probably not.

But the circumstances that allow some people to drink may be limited, and maybe some of the youngsters will be turned away from taking a sip of alcohol and learn to wait until they're 21.