



## **Alcohol and Caffeine: A Deadly Combination**

Over the past few weeks, the local news covered several stories about the dangers of alcoholic energy drinks such as Four Loko or Joose. Drinks such as these are compared to drinking 2 cups of coffee mixed with four cans of beer. This combination leads to even higher impaired judgment, which leads to drinking more alcohol than normal as well as a higher rate of risk-taking behavior.

Young people, teens and young adults, are under the impression that the caffeine in these drinks will offset the alcohol. Caffeine, especially in the dose in which these drinks provide, increase blood pressure and heart rate and these drinks can cause even further problems such as stomach issues, abnormal breathing, and heart problems. Alcohol on the other hand slows brain functioning, which impairs our ability to react and think. When mixed, the effects of these two substances do not cancel each other out.

The caffeine in these drinks counteracts the sleepiness one feels after drinking alcohol. By doing this, abusers delay the feeling of drunkenness; therefore, young adults and teens end up drinking more than they normally would in a shorter period of time. For instance, drinking one can of Four Loko in one hour is comparable to drinking an entire six-pack of beer, except that the caffeine will cause the person to continue drinking. Imagine drinking two cans of Four Loko in one hour thinking it is equivalent to two beers.

To demonstrate the dangers of mixing alcohol and caffeine, seven states in the past few weeks have introduced legislation to ban the sale of alcohol energy drinks. Until legislation is passed, parents need to stress the importance of living responsibly and enjoying activities without the use of alcohol.

All parents need to advocate that the mixing of alcohol and caffeine is extremely dangerous. These substances are dangerous to the degree that studies concerning the physiological effects of these drinks are not approved due to the dangerous effects it would have on the subjects participating.

The Haddonfield Municipal Alliance hopes that you will share this information with adults and with your children. As the holidays approach, underage drinking increases. We all need to be aware of the dangers of these drinks and of drinking in general. The best way to encourage good decision making is to talk with our family members.