

POSSIBLE HEADLINE

Buying alcohol for kids who ‘shoulder tap’ illegal, morally wrong

By Arunee SengChanh

Shoulder tapping. This is a term I learned during middle school and, sadly, later became a term that I would witness my peers demonstrate.

Attempting to recollect the memories of my adolescent years, it feels as if it were yesterday that my friends and I were arguing over who was going to go to a store and shoulder tap customers as they walked in. This strategy of getting alcohol was kind of hit or miss. Either the adult bought the alcohol, or they didn't. We also had to build a list in our mind of characteristics of adults who looked like they would buy us alcohol. After shoulder tapping a certain number of times, we became pretty good at judging which adults would buy us alcohol and which ones wouldn't. I think that out of the many times my friends and I did this, about 40 percent of the adults we asked would buy the alcohol for us.

So what's the big deal with buying alcohol for *kids*? Well, for one, it's illegal. Second, it's morally wrong. Growing up, I knew it was wrong to consume alcohol before the legal age of 21, but the age limit certainly wasn't going to stop me, or any other kid I knew. It's a scary thought that a kid, with the offer of a couple of extra dollars, could coax an adult to buy the alcoholic beverage that the kid wants.

Many adults I've encountered who buy alcoholic beverages for underage drinkers think that it's OK for teenagers to drink every once in awhile, that teenagers are just being teenagers, and it's a phase everyone goes through. Truth is, it's not a phase *all* teenagers go through, and certainly doesn't have to be. In today's society, it's already hard enough to not give in to peer pressure to drink or use drugs, but when adults think it's harmless fun for teenagers to drink, it makes it so much harder because they are enabling us to drink. Even if an adult is supervising the underage drinkers, it makes the situation even more ridiculous because we as teenagers are not held accountable for our mistakes because there was an adult in the picture.

I have seen the many devastating effects alcohol has had in many people's lives, including my own. It has torn families apart, created unnecessary crimes and resulted in avoidable deaths. Which makes me think, "Why would you inflict that kind of damage on adolescents?" I'm not sure if it's that adults these days are not well informed about the effects of alcohol on the human body, or if it's simply that they don't care, but buying alcohol for underage drinkers is illegal and wrong. Alcohol, along with many other harmful substances, is destroying more and more of today's youth - bit by bit. What many people think is harmless fun can result in lifelong consequences.

So adults, next time an underage drinker asks you to purchase alcohol for them, just refuse to do it. You'll not only be doing that young person a favor, but yourself, too. If your conscience doesn't get to you, the law will.

Arunee SengChanh is a college student and volunteer with Oregon Partnership (OP), a statewide nonprofit that exists to end alcohol and drug abuse and suicide. OP, together with the Oregon Liquor Control Commission, the National Alcohol Beverage Control Association and the Face it, Parents underage drinking prevention campaign, has kicked off a summer public awareness initiative to prevent "shoulder tapping."