

Fighting to save the soda you love

BY MIKE COLESWORTH
reporter

You're having a party and you and your guests will settle for nothing less than everyone's favorite "fully-loaded citrus soda" since middle school. To your surprise, the infamous SURGE is missing from every shelf of every store in town. What happened? Well, it turns out Coca-Cola has discontinued it and SURGE has officially become the endangered species of all soft drinks. But don't feel helpless, you're not only person upset by this decision.

"I've been a SURGE fan since it came out in 1997 and it really became an everyday part of my life." Eric Karkovack, webmaster of SaveSURGE.org, said, "Then in 2001 I noticed it was becoming hard to find in my area. I later found out that my local Coca-Cola bottler had discontinued the brand. I started look-

ing online to see if other areas of the country were losing SURGE and sadly they were."

SURGE originally came about to compete with Pepsi's Mountain Dew. Sales started out strong, but after a few years on the market, they dropped severely. After a failed attempt to re-market the soft drink, SURGE began to disappear from store shelves; thus, sparking one of the largest movements in soft drink history.

"SURGE has a very unique citrus taste that is really unlike anything else I've ever tasted." Karkovack said, "That taste has inspired so many other people to visit SaveSURGE.org and help with the campaign. Our online petition has over 5,000 signatures and a recent survey we used to share market research with Coke had over 1,000 responses in just over a week. Quite honestly, I don't believe that any other soda has this kind of dedicated following. People really care about what happens to it and that is why it's worth saving."

This dedication to SURGE grows every day and while Mis-

souri has been claimed SURGE-less, local teenagers have been taking trips just to indulge in it. The closest location is Timothy's Pizza & Grill in Columbia, Illinois. Timothy's, like all other SURGE serving locations, is using a left-over supply that is starting to run low. Timothy himself, is currently working hard to find another case while SURGE fans finish off what's left.

"It's just fun to go with your friends and do something out of the ordinary." Molly Brady, sophomore, said, "It's something to do and I like watching everyone get hype."

Going on "SURGE runs" may ease a fan's craving, but unless more action is taken, it will only make the soda more and more of a rarity. Coca-Cola states that while production has slowed, the syrup used to make SURGE is still being made in small amounts for soda fountains only. But proof of new shipments has yet to be seen as the flow of SURGE slows to a trickle. Fans have mixed views of the future of SURGE, but with the kind of support it's getting, many

see a triumphant return on the horizon.

"I think they [Coca-Cola] will bring it back because the popularity of Mellow Yellow is drying up and SURGE has so many supporters." Zac Penrod, SCCC student and active member of the SaveSURGE movement, said, "I think they'll give it a try. It's just so good."

The response to the movement has been greater than Karkovack and Avery Lund, a Minnesota high school student and co-founder of SaveSURGE, ever dreamed it would be. They feel that a lot of progress has been made toward successfully rescuing SURGE from extinction and claim that there is are some very big discussions going on with Coca-Cola over the future of the popular, neon-green soda.

"There's no guarantee that it will return but I can say that we're a lot closer now than we were back in 2002." Karkovack said, "As we always say on the site, no one should have to lose their favorite soda!"

Life of SURGE

The birth and banishment of the fully loaded citrus soda

Late 1994 - Coca-Cola needed a citrus soda that was high in energy and easy to drink. During the following months, SURGE formulas were being narrowed down.

▶ **1996** - Coca-Cola introduced SURGE to Norway.

▶ **January 29, 1997** - Coke released 3 multi-million dollar commercials during the Super Bowl that declared the extreme drink would be available soon.

▼
The first year out, SURGE sold 69 million cases.

◀ **March of 2000** - Many bottlers across America began to replace SURGE with Mello Yello. Coke then completely dumped SURGE from their line-up.

◀ **By the end of its second year**, SURGE sales decreased by 17.2 million cases to 51.8 million.

◀ **At the same time SURGE was shocking the U.S.**, Coke introduced a less caffeinated soda called Citra. The first year, Citra sold 21 million cases.