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**UNDERAGE DRINKING AMONG OREGON YOUTH OUTPACES  
NATIONAL AVERAGE BY 94 PERCENT**

State-Wide Campaign to Raise Awareness About Issue & Provide Resources for Parents

(February 17, 2009) – PORTLAND, OR – Underage drinking is often thought of more as a “right of passage” than a dinner table topic, but a state-wide campaign launched this month aims to make it a community discussion. Staggering statistics show that Oregon’s youth are indulging more than in other states especially among a very impressionable audience: middle-schoolers. Information from the Oregon Healthy Teen Survey and the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, tells us that more than 30 percent of Oregon eighth-graders consumed alcohol in the past 30 days, a rate that’s 94 percent higher than the national average.

A partnership of concerned organizations from around the state has joined forces to keep kids safe by reducing the acceptability and prevalence of underage drinking. The group’s “Because Oregon” public service media campaign invites parents, educators and community leaders to educate themselves on the dangers of underage drinking so they can positively influence the decisions kids make concerning alcohol. The goal is to encourage parents, educators and community leaders to acknowledge the issue in their own homes and communities, and to provide them with online resources to educate themselves and their kids about the harm underage drinking can cause.

"Those of us who work on this serious problem know how powerful parents truly are," said Judy Cushing, CEO and president of Oregon Partnership. "We are pleased to join this campaign because it will amplify our work in communities around the state. Through the use of television resources, we can reach a majority of Oregon parents."

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According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, strategies that emphasize parental involvement are the single-most effective approach to deterring underage drinking. Countless studies have shown that parental attitudes regarding alcohol can influence a youth's drinking behavior. To support parents and encourage conversations about underage drinking, the "Because Oregon" website ([www.BecauseOregon.com](http://www.BecauseOregon.com)) has links to resources and tips for parents and others including:

- What to consider about the topic of underage drinking.
- How to talk to your kids about underage drinking.
- Stats on the damaging effects of alcohol on the developing adolescent brain.
- Efforts the State of Oregon is undertaking on the issue of underage drinking.
- List of prevention and treatment organizations for local support on the issue of underage drinking and more.

### **About Because Oregon**

Made up of concerned organizations from around the state, the "Because Oregon" campaign seeks to create a discussion about the harmful effects underage drinking has on communities and on citizens across the state. Organizations that support the Because Oregon campaign include the Oregon Beer & Wine Distributors Association, the Oregon Partnership, Southern Oregon Drug Awareness, On Track, United Way and others. For more information, go to [www.BecauseOregon.com](http://www.BecauseOregon.com).

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