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TO PARENTS THIS SPRING BREAK: BINGE DRINKING TREND ON THE RISE

Statewide Campaign Offers Parents Tools to Talk to their Kids About Underage Drinking

(March 24, 2009) – PORTLAND, OR – Four in 10 Oregon young adults admitted to binge drinking in the past month in a recent survey by the Oregon Dept. of Human Services, a statistic that will likely increase in the coming weeks and months as thousands of Oregon’s youth are on Spring Break vacation and begin celebrating the end of the school year with high school proms and graduations.

According to experts, binge drinking is defined as the dangerous practice of consuming large quantities of alcoholic beverages in a single session: five or more drinks for boys and four or more drinks for girls. Binge drinking among the youth is a practice that is increasing over time and often involves rounds of “shots,” beer bong and drinking games, which are extremely risky behavior and could include alcohol poisoning.

Experts worry about the long-term effects of drinking alcohol at a young age. The Oregon Dept. of Human Services says 45 percent of people who begin drinking alcohol before age 14 become dependent on alcohol while only 10 percent of those who wait until they are 21 to start drinking have problems with alcohol later in life.

Because of an upward trend in underage drinking, a partnership of concerned organizations from around the state is working to stem the tide. 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 young people 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.

"Oregon has one of the highest underage drinking rates in the country, " said Dr. Bonnie Nagel, from Oregon Health & Science University. "It's incredibly important to get the word out to parents and the community because alcohol may permanently damage the developing adolescent brain."

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) 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.

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