

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 22, 2008

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TOWN HALL MEETINGS SEEK TO ADDRESS UNDERAGE DRINKING

ATLANTA (GA) – During April, communities across Georgia will be hosting Town Hall Meetings to alert parents, teachers, youth and other concerned citizens about new research on the risks of underage drinking and empowering them to take action to stop it. The Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Prevention of Underage Drinking (ICCPUD), a part of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is supporting other Town Hall Meetings which are taking place in communities across the country during late March and early April 2008. Research shows that more teenagers drink than smoke or use drugs. Health, social and economic problems can also result from the use of alcohol by youth under the age of 21.

“Underage drinking is a serious problem in Georgia and across the nation. Overall, more than 115,000 of Georgia’s high school students, within a period of 30 days, have been in a car with someone who had been drinking alcohol,” said Dr. Stuart Brown, Director of the Division of Public Health. “These alarming statistics have prompted us, along with our partners, to participate in Georgia’s Underage Drinking Prevention Initiative and have conversations about this issue during these Town Hall Meetings.”

The meetings will provide insight into the nature and scope of underage drinking and offer steps for preventing it through reduced demand, availability and access. Parents and other concerned citizens will be given knowledge and tools to connect with today’s youth about the dangers of underage drinking.

Officials from DHR, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the Georgia Council on Alcohol and Drugs agree that children and teens are less likely to abuse alcohol if parents are involved in their children’s lives, make and enforce clear standards and rules and are positive role models.

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“What parents may not realize is that children say that their parents’ disapproval of underage drinking is a key reason they have chosen not to drink” says Terry L. Cline, Ph.D., Administrator of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The Town Hall Meetings, funded in part by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, are designed to educate parents, teachers, officials, youth and other community members about the impact underage drinking has on the community. The meetings are being held by local drug-free community coalitions in partnership with the Georgia Department of Human Resources.

For more information, please visit: www.livedrugfree.org or <http://health.state.ga.us/programs/prevention/index.asp>.