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CAMPAIGN REACHES OUT WITH EMPOWERING MESSAGE TO PARENTS

Portland, ME - This Spring, parents of teenagers will receive encouraging messages on television and radio, urging them to take a stand against underage drinking. The series of public Service Announcements, produced by students at the Portland Arts & Technology High School (PATHS), are part of an effort by local group Portland Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol (CMCA) to increase adult awareness of their powerful role in keeping kids safe. The campaign message is: Please, Be Smart. Take a Stand. No Alcohol until they're 21!

"We're reaching out to all the parents out there who feel powerless, who think underage drinking is inevitable and there's nothing they can do," says Malory Shaughnessy, Community Outreach Coordinator for CMCA and mother of four sons. "We want parents to know how powerful they really are."

According to the Maine Office of Substance Abuse, parents' attitudes and actions are two of the strongest influences on whether teens drink. For example, statewide student survey data shows that teenagers are far less likely to drink alcohol when they know their parents think underage drinking is "very wrong." They're also far less likely to drink when they believe they'll get caught.

"We want to reach out to all the parents out there who may not know about the levels of danger and harm associated with underage drinking. Current scientific research highlights the long-term consequences from underage drinking on the developing adolescent brain. Underage alcohol use is linked to sexual assault, alcohol poisoning, accidents, violent behavior, property crime and vandalism, depression and suicide." Shaughnessy stated, "Just taking away the keys does not work."

The PSAs also send a message to parents about the legal consequences of providing alcohol to minors. The ads are expected to run through May and into June on all of the major television and radio stations in Portland, to coincide with prom and graduation season. The spots feature the likes of District Attorney Stephanie Anderson, Chief Tim Burton, School Superintendent Mary Jo O'Connor and newly appointed Maine Medical Center Chief of Medical Staff Dr. Jacqueline Cawley. Teen actors from Kathleen Harris's Deering High School drama department and local adult actors helped to create the spots. Portland Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol (CMCA) is a non-profit coalition working to create a safe and healthy environment for our youth by strengthening local attitudes, policies, and enforcement to reduce underage access to alcohol.

CMCA partners include Portland Public Schools, Portland Police Department, Cumberland County District Attorney's Office, and Portland Housing Authority, as well as local businesses, faith organizations, neighborhood associations, youth leadership groups, and parents. For more information contact Portland CMCA at (207) 773-7737, cmca@mcd.org, or check the website at www.portlandcmca.org.

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