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## **COUNCIL TO DECLARE APRIL YOUTH ALCOHOL PREVENTION MONTH**

PORTLAND, ME – Spring should be a time of celebration for our youth. Graduations and proms take place, families celebrate, and memories are created. However, on Monday night, April 3, 2006, the community will be reminded to celebrate safely without the illegal and dangerous consumption of alcohol by minors. Portland Mayor Jim Cohen will present a resolution to the Portland City Council declaring the month of April Youth Alcohol Prevention Month.

"This problem affects all of our community and will take all of us to address it," according to Cohen. "I invite the citizens of Portland to participate in the schedule of events organized during this month that will not only help us better understand the devastating costs of underage drinking, but will also help us reduce the alcohol-related problems in our community.

The Resolution will recognize the urgent relevance of the work being undertaken by local group, Portland Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol. Made up of youth, adults, and organizations, Portland CMCA's mission is to build a community with norms, policies, and enforcement that prevent the accessibility of alcohol to youth.

"Studies have shown that adolescents have fewer alcohol-related problems when their parents and the community at large set clear expectations for not drinking," adds Malory Shaughnessy, Community Outreach Coordinator for Portland CMCA. "Our message to the community is simple. Please, be smart. Take a stand. No alcohol until they're 21."

Alcohol continues to be the drug of choice among our youth. Underage alcohol use is linked to sexual assault, alcohol poisoning, accidents, violent behavior, property crime and vandalism, depression and suicide. In Portland, 25% of 8th graders and 40% of 9th graders have consumed alcohol during the past 30 days, and more than half of 11th and 12th graders in Portland have consumed alcohol during the past 30 days, with the majority of these students participating in binge drinking.

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.

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