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For Immediate Release

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Teens answer: “WHAT’S YOUR REASON?”

Portland, ME—**Youth tell us what keeps them drug and alcohol free** during a LIVE broadcast at 7 p.m. on Thursday, April 17th, 2008 on Portland Community Television Network, channel 4.

According to anonymous teen survey data, most young people don’t drink. Yet, we rarely hear about this often silent majority. This Thursday night, nine contestants will perform in word, song, and video *their* thoughts on what it means to be young today, and why they choose not to drink alcohol or use other drugs.

Viewers will be able to share their comments in real-time via the 21 Reasons blog, accessed through www.21reasons.org. Viewers and studio audience will vote for the most sincere, creative, and passionate contest entry. Grand prize for this ‘American Idol’ style contest is a \$250 Maine Mall Gift Certificate. Celebrity judges include **Justin Ellis**, Portland Press Herald Generation NXT columnist, **Sgt. Scott Pelletier** of the Portland Police Department, and **Shannon Moss**, Anchor, News 8, WMTW.

The data from the 2006 Maine Youth Drug and Alcohol Use Survey (MYDAUS) showed that an average of 30% of Cumberland County youth in grades 6-12 consumed alcohol within the last 30 days. Among seniors, 52% had consumed alcohol within the same time frame, and 30% admitted to binge drinking—defined as having 5 or more alcoholic beverages in a row—within the last two weeks.

Research shows that young people’s decisions around alcohol are strongly influenced by environmental risk factors—alcohol advertising and products geared toward youth, the glamorization of alcohol in our culture, and easy access through retail and social sources. However, we also know that Maine youth are **five times more likely to drink alcohol** if they think they will not be caught by their parents (2006 MYDAUS). “This makes parental monitoring skills such as asking teens where they are going and what they will be doing, knowing their friends, calling to check in, waiting up for them, and giving them hugs when they get home are critical in supporting youth’s efforts to stay drug and alcohol free,” states Jo Morrissey, Assistant Project Director for 21 Reasons. “In addition, it’s important to keep track of your alcohol and model responsible behavior. Statements such as, ‘I’ve had a bad day, I really need a drink,’ can easily undo all the other efforts.”

Thursday’s event, co-sponsored by 21 Reasons and the City of Portland Public Health Division, Department of Health and Human Services, will celebrate the efforts of local youth, their families, and the community to prevent underage drinking. It is being held as part of Youth Alcohol Prevention Month in the city of Portland.

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