

## PRESS RELEASE

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### PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITY DURING PROM AND GRADUATION

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

JACKSON (April 1, 2009) – Spring is such a hopeful season, especially in Michigan when we look forward to the warm, sunny weather of summer. But spring is also a time of transition for teens. Some are enjoying their first big dress-up prom or moving onto more adult experiences with graduation as a starting point. If poor decision-making and risky behavior become involved in these rites of spring, the season can quickly change from hopeful to devastating.

April is National Alcohol Awareness Month and the Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition (JCSAPC) wants to help parents to reduce underage drinking. Statistically, prom night and graduation time rank high for increased instances of underage drinking. Making good decisions is so crucial to preventing alcohol-related tragedies. To help teens make those good decisions, parents need to provide love and support, educate their children about the consequences of drinking, and communicate clear messages. The conversation about alcohol and giving a clear no-use message isn't easy. But it is one of the responsibilities of being a parent.

*So, what can parent do?* Kelsey Winston the Coordinator of JCSAPC, encourages parents to, "Talk with your child about the dangers of alcohol use and ask your teen about their plans for prom or graduation." The Coalition has produced two informational handouts that help address underage alcohol use. The first helps parents talk with their teen about their prom or graduation plans, and what parents can do to have a better handle on what is going on. Parents can convey their concerns without being judgmental, stay interested in your teens' activities without appearing to intrude into their lives, and reiterate your support for them regardless of what issues arise. The Coalition encourages parents to ask their teenager the 'W4H' – Who, What, Where, When and for How long. Winston says that, "Learning what your child is planning to do is not only helpful for a parent's piece of mind, but it also sends the message to your child that you care about what activities they are involved in and that you plan to take an active role in knowing what your child is doing." The second handout provides parents information on their responsibility of not providing alcohol to minors, and what the consequences are if they do so. "Providing, selling, and knowingly allowing underage youth to have access to alcohol is illegal and the appropriate enforcement action will be taken," says Sergeant Elmer Hitt of the Jackson Police Department. Winston also reminds parents that, "Permitting teenagers to drink in your home sends an inappropriate message about underage alcohol use and it has legal consequences for the parent as well." If you are found guilty of **allowing** minors to have alcohol, you can be charged with a misdemeanor, assessed fines up to \$1,000.00 and/or, sent to jail for up to 90 days.

Parents who take an active role in their teen's life make a positive difference in helping their teens with healthy choices. The Coalition encourages parents and role models to talk with teens about their prom and graduation plans and encourage alcohol-free activities.

#### **More information about:**

- *Jackson County Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition* and its activities, please contact Kelsey Winston at (517) 796-5133 or via email at [kwinston@uwjackson.org](mailto:kwinston@uwjackson.org)
- If community members would like copies of the parent educational flyers, please contact Kelsey Winston at (517) 796-5122 or via email at [kwinston@uwjackson.org](mailto:kwinston@uwjackson.org)
- If you or someone you know would like more information about tips parents can utilize in helping kid's make good decisions please visit [www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com) for materials tailored for parents.