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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 14, 2013

SUMMER MONTHS DEADLIEST FOR TEEN DRIVERS

*AS 'GRADUATION SEASON' IS UPON US, A GREATER
WASHINGTON GROUP URGES PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT IN
COMBATING UNDERAGE DRINKING THIS SUMMER*

McLean, VA, May 14, 2013 – Citing the fact that summer's arrival also ushers in that period (May – August) when the greatest number of U.S. teen traffic deaths occurⁱ, a Washington-metropolitan area alcohol education group has launched a parental-education initiative to combat both teen drinking and drunk driving this summer.

The McLean-based, nonprofit Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP) is providing area parents of teens with "Ten Tips for a Safe Summer." WRAP's tips, designed to inform Greater Washington parents on how best to deter teen drinking during the dangerous summer months, are available on the organization's web site at:

http://www.wrap.org/files/info_tips.htm

"During the summer months, nearly twice as many U.S. teens die in traffic crashes compared to the rest of the year," said Kurt Gregory Erickson, WRAP's President. ***"For too many parents, unfortunately, summer's unstructured time may also be a deadly time for their teenage children and their friends."***

In 2011, 32-percent of young drivers (15 to 20 years old) who were killed in crashes had a blood alcohol concentration level of 0.01 grams/deciliter, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. In that same year, 26-percent of young drivers died with a BAC of 0.08 g/dL.ⁱⁱ

According to the American Medical Association, approximately 11 million American youth under the age of 21 drink alcohol. Although the following national studies highlight a recent downward trend of alcohol consumption by U.S. teens, the reports' findings also show that nearly half of the teens who drink do so in excess, consuming five or more drinks in a row and one or more times in a two week period:

- **Binge Drinking:** The 2012 Monitoring the Future survey sponsored by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, reported that nearly half (48.8%) of U.S. high school seniors don't view binge drinking on weekends as carrying a great risk (an increase in such an attitude from the previous year). In addition and while alcohol use rates have declined consistently in the last four years,

alcohol is still the drug of choice for all three surveyed age groups (8th, 10th and 12th grade students).ⁱⁱⁱ

- **Alcohol:** According to the 2012 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS) by The Partnership at Drugfree.org and MetLife Foundation, 57-percent of U.S. teens in grades 9-12 admit to consuming alcohol in the last year^{iv}.
- **Alcohol and Risky Behaviors:** according to the 2012 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey commissioned by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 24.1-percent of U.S. high school students rode in a motor vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol and 8.2-percent had, one or more times, driven a motor vehicle, themselves, when they had been drinking alcohol.^v

WRAP's updated, ten tips for parents to deter underage drinking and drunk driving this summer include advice on: how parents can best talk with their teen about alcohol use bolstered by studies confirming that parents can have a significant – if not most significant – impact as to whether their teens will engage in risky behaviors including the use of alcohol; providing structure to the summer month's unstructured times for teens citing that children of “absentee parents” were four-times more likely to abuse substances than children in highly-structured homes; and even how to safely *host* a teen party this summer including not serving beverages in easily-tampered cups, amongst other tips.

In addition and as part of WRAP's tip for parents to “lay down the law” with their teenage children, the organization reminds parents of two newer local drunk driving laws including:

- **VIRGINIA...**On July 1st of last year, a new law (HB 279) became effective in Virginia ensuring that all persons convicted of DUI in that state will be required to install ignition interlock devices in their cars.
- **MARYLAND...**Effective the fall of 2011, a new law (HB 1276 and SB 803) in Maryland mandates ignition interlock devices for all persons under 21 years of age convicted of driving with virtually *any* amount of alcohol (.02 + BAC) in their systems

Most importantly, if you suspect that your child is drinking, intervene. Talk to your child and obtain qualified professional help if necessary. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services found that harsh, inconsistent discipline and hostility or rejection toward children has also been found to significantly predict adolescent drinking and alcohol-related problems. Set clear expectations and be consistent with discipline for rules not followed.

WRAP officials also suggest that parents be aware of social networks their children use. Party promoters often prey on youth via social media sites and by promising a good time and access to alcohol for a fee, according to WRAP.

“Make no mistake about it, parents play an integral role in when and if their children drink alcohol,” said Erickson. ***“These tips are simply meant to reinforce their efforts to foster a healthy and safe summer for them and their teenage children.”***

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism found that young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol addiction than those who didn't begin drinking until age 21. In addition, youth who drink alcohol participate in other risky behaviors including driving while impaired, riding in a car with a drunk driver and, via impaired judgments about sex and contraception, placing them at increased risk for HIV infection, other sexually-transmitted diseases and unplanned pregnancies.

For the 21st year in a row, WRAP recognized Greater Washington teens fighting underage drinking and drunk driving via the organization's hosting of its annual GEICO Student Awards this spring awarding three area high school student groups with plaques as well as cash prizes to help sustain their efforts in promoting alcohol and drug-free lifestyles to their fellow students.

The nonprofit [501(c)(3)] Washington Regional Alcohol Program (WRAP) is an award-winning public-private partnership working to prevent drunk driving and underage drinking. Through public education, innovative health education programs and advocacy, WRAP is credited with keeping the metro-Washington area's alcohol-related traffic deaths consistently lower than the national average. WRAP, however, may best be known to area residents via the organization's popular free cab ride service for would-be drunk drivers, *SoberRide*.

For more information, visit WRAP's web site at **www.wrap.org**.

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ⁱ <http://fastlane.dot.gov/2011/05/national-youth-traffic-safety-month-a-reminder-to-teens-safe-driving-doesnt-take-the-summer-off.html>

ⁱⁱ <http://www-nrd.nhtsa.dot.gov/Pubs/811744.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/mtf-overview2012.pdf>

^{iv} <http://www.drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/04/PATS-2012-FULL-REPORT.pdf>

^v <http://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/pdf/ss/ss6104.pdf>