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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***

***** NEW VIRGINIA DRINKING & DRIVING LAW GOES INTO EFFECT JULY 1ST *****

McLean, VA, May 24, 2012 – 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 2010, over one-quarter (27.5%) of all teen traffic fatalities occurring in the Washington-metropolitan area involved alcohol according to WRAP (and as excerpted from the organization's 19th-annual report, "How Safe are Our Roads?, A Data Report on the Impact of Drunk Driving on Highway Safety in the Washington Metropolitan Region" prepared by the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments and also viewable online at <http://www.wrap.org/highwaysafety11.pdf>). According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, almost one-in-five (18%) young drivers (16-20 years old) killed in U.S. crashes in 2010 had a blood alcohol concentration of .08 grams per deciliter of higher.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 latest Monitoring the Future survey (2011) sponsored by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, reported that the majority (47.6%) 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 and Marijuana:** According to this month's released 22nd-annual Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATs) by The Partnership at Drugfree.org and MetLife Foundation, 56-percent of U.S. teens in grades 9-12 admit to consuming alcohol in the last year. In addition and in citing a 21-percent increase in marijuana use by U.S. teens since 2008, researchers have documented past year marijuana use by teens with increased alcohol use by the same (45% to 84%).^{iv}
- **Alcohol and Risky Behaviors:** according to the latest National Youth Risk Behavior Survey (2009) commissioned by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, over one-quarter (28.3%) of U.S. high school students rode in a motor vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol and nearly ten-percent (9.7%) 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 new local drunk driving laws including:

- **VIRGINIA...**On July 1st of this year, a new law (HB 279) becomes 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 last fall, 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 20th 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.

Commemorating its 30th year, 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/811606.pdf>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.monitoringthefuture.org/pubs/monographs/mtf-overview2011.pdf>

^{iv} <http://www.drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/05/PATS-FULL-Report-FINAL-May-2-PDF-.pdf>

^v http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/yrbs/pdf/us_overview_yrbs.pdf