

23rd Annual NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month

Theme—April 2009:

**OUR CHILDREN, OUR FUTURE:
UNDERAGE DRINKING IS A COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY**

HISTORY:

NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month, sponsored by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) since 1987, encourages local communities to focus on alcoholism and alcohol-related issues. NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month began as a way of reaching out to the American public with information about the disease of alcoholism – that it is a treatable disease, not a moral weakness, and that alcoholics can and do recover.

As a national public awareness campaign, NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month has featured honorary chairpersons such as Senator George McGovern, Dr. David Satcher, the former Surgeon General, Barry McCaffrey, the Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy, New York Yankees baseball star Derek Jeter, and has collaborated with organizations such as The Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free, a unique coalition of more than 30 Governors' spouses, Federal agencies, and public and private groups focused on preventing the use of alcohol by children ages 9 to 15. A primary focus of NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month over the past ten years has been Underage Drinking and the devastating effects it can have on our youth.

An integral part of NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month has been **Alcohol-Free Weekend**, which takes place on the first weekend of April (April 3-5, 2009). **Alcohol-Free Weekend** is designed to raise public awareness about the use of alcohol and how it may be affecting individuals, families, and businesses. During **Alcohol-Free Weekend**, NCADD extends an open invitation to all Americans to engage in three alcohol-free days. Those who experience difficulty or discomfort in this 72-hour experiment are urged to contact local NCADD affiliates, Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Al-Anon to learn more about alcoholism and its early symptoms. Essentially, it is a community consciousness-raising effort about alcoholism and health related issues and may serve as a trigger to recovery.

SOME HELPFUL LINKS:

The Surgeon General's Call to Action To Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking,
<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/topics/underagedrinking>

Center for Science in the Public Interest
<http://www.cspinet.org/booze/youthsurveys.htm>

American Medical Association
<http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/category/3566.html>

National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information
<http://ncadi.samhsa.gov/features/youth>
<http://www.thecoolspot.gov>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
<http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov>

Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth
<http://camy.org/>

Youth, Alcohol and Other Drugs Fact Sheet
<http://www.ncadd.org/facts/index.html>

Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)
<http://www.aa.org>

Al-Anon Family Groups
<http://www.al-anon.alateen.org>

National Association for Children of Alcoholics
<http://www.nacoa.org>

April 2009: NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month Theme
OUR CHILDREN, OUR FUTURE:
UNDERAGE DRINKING IS A COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR USING NCADD ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH KIT

- 1) **Adaptation and Reproduction Permission:** All of the materials may be reproduced or adapted to your own needs and distributed within your community without permission. An acknowledgment that the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) is the sponsor of NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month, and identification of our website (www.ncadd.org) as an information resource would be appreciated.
- 2) **Distribution:** Distribute materials to other organizations and local print media to begin generating early community interest in NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month.
- 3) **Localize Materials:** Add local information to the sample proclamation and press materials to greatly increase their appeal for officials and media in your community.
- 4) **Time Line:** The following time line may be helpful in using this kit:

JANUARY: Customize materials for use in your community; identify public official to issue proclamation; begin planning suggested grassroots activities or develop your own activities; place camera-ready advertisements.

FEBRUARY: Submit live copy PSAs to radio stations.

MARCH: Adapt sample proclamation and press materials for local use; plan proclamation ceremony or press event to kick-off NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month; distribute media advisory and news release; make follow-up phone calls to media.

APRIL: Publicize each of your NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month activities to target audiences; submit letter to the editor and op-ed piece.

CONTENTS: NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month Kit:

- Organizer's Guide:
(includes Sample Proclamation; Media Advisory & News Release; :30 Radio PSA Scripts; Op-Ed Piece; Letter to the Editor; Suggested Grassroots Activities)
- Youth, Alcohol and Other Drugs Fact Sheet (online)
- 2009 Resource and Referral Guide
- Facts About Underage Drinking- Fact Sheet (online)

PROCLAMATION

Instructions for use:

- 1) **Select Officials:** Make a list of top public officials and other leaders in your community who have expressed concern about alcohol problems. Decide who would attract the most press coverage.
- 2) **Local Relevance:** Make the proclamation as relevant to your community as possible by adding local statistics to the sample below. You will have a much better chance of enlisting the support of a local public official.
- 3) **Who to Contact :** If anyone in your organization knows the person you want to issue the proclamation, have that individual send it directly to the official, then follow up with a phone call. If you don't have a personal contact, send the proclamation to the individual's press representative or community affairs liaison with a cover letter explaining your request and the activities that you have planned for NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month.
- 4) **Other Community Organizations:** Contact other concerned organizations in your community and ask them to participate in NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month. Ask them to send letters to the official urging him/her to issue a proclamation.
- 5) **Final Draft and Reproduction:** Once an official agrees to issue the proclamation, work with his/her office on a final draft. Reproduce the proclamation as large as possible for use as a prop on television.
- 6) **Electronic Copy:** Request a digital or electronic copy for use on your website, newsletter, with press releases etc. Please send a copy of the proclamation to NCADD (see end of Sample Proclamation for contact information)
- 6) **Press Conference and Photos:** Schedule a press conference and/or photo opportunity with the official for the last week in March to announce NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month in your community. Use the event to highlight a successful local prevention program for youth and to publicize other activities you have planned. Invite local health, law enforcement and educational professionals to participate. Have someone take photos and post photos on website, add to newsletter and send to NCADD with names/titles of individuals in photo.

SAMPLE PROCLAMATION:

NCADD ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH 2009

WHEREAS, alcohol is a primary factor in the four leading causes of death for young persons ages 10-21 and

WHEREAS, almost **6,500 persons** ages 10-21 die each year: almost 2,400 in drinking and driving crashes, almost 2,400 die from other accidents, falls , fires etc., 1,500 die in alcohol-related homicides and 300 due to suicide and

WHEREAS, approximately 9.7 million current drinkers in the United States are between the ages of 12-20; and

WHEREAS, adolescents use alcohol more than tobacco or illicit drugs; and

WHEREAS, young people begin drinking, on average, at 13.1 years of age; and

WHEREAS, young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21; and

WHEREAS, alcohol abuse is linked to as many as two-thirds of all sexual assaults and date rapes of teens and college students and

WHEREAS, alcohol abuse is a major factor in unprotected sex among youth, increasing their risk of contracting HIV or other transmitted diseases; and

WHEREAS, the typical American young person will see 100,000 beer commercials before he or she turns 18 (that is more than for sneakers, gum and jeans combined); and

WHEREAS, 13 percent of all youth, ages 12-17, had at least one serious problem related to drinking in the past year;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, (INSERT NAME OF LOCAL PUBLIC OFFICIAL) join the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc, (NCADD) and do hereby proclaim that **April 2009 is NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month** in (INSERT NAME OF AREA GOVERNED BY LOCAL PUBLIC OFFICIAL). As the (INSERT TITLE OF LOCAL PUBLIC OFFICIAL) I also call upon all citizens, parents, governmental agencies, public and private institutions, businesses, hospitals, schools and colleges in (REPEAT NAME OF AREA) to support efforts that will increase community awareness, understanding and action to address underage drinking in our community and join us in **“Our Children, Our Future: Underage Drinking is a Community Responsibility”**.

Note: Please send copies of Proclamations and Photos (as e-mail attachment) to:
Robert J. Lindsey, M.Ed., CEAP
President/CEO
NCADD, Inc.
244 East 58th Street, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10022

E-mail: president@ncadd.org

MEDIA ADVISORY

Instructions for use of **Media Advisory**:

- 1) **Localize Media Advisory:** Substitute local information in the media advisory below, reproduce copies on your letterhead or news release paper and use it to alert the media to your NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month proclamation ceremony.
- 2) **Distribute Advisory:** Send the media advisory to the city desks of your local newspapers and to the assignment editors at your local radio and television stations. Be sure that they receive the advisory at least two days before the event.
- 3) **Media Follow-Up:** Call the media before your event to make sure that they received the advisory and try to persuade them to cover the event. Call the day before to remind them and answer any last minute questions.

SAMPLE MEDIA ADVISORY:

For More Information, Contact:
(INSERT NAME & TITLE OF LOCAL CONTACT)
(INSERT PHONE NUMBER)

... MEDIA ADVISORY ... MEDIA ADVISORY ... MEDIA ADVISORY ...

(INSERT NAME OF OFFICIAL) TO PROCLAIM
NCADD ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH IN (INSERT NAME OF AREA)
AS PART OF NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO END UNDERAGE DRINKING

WHAT: (INSERT NAME OF PUBLIC OFFICIAL) will proclaim that April is NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month in (INSERT NAME OF AREA) and join the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) in a national call to action to end underage drinking. Hundreds of communities across the country will also participate in this grassroots effort to highlight the dangers of underage drinking and to identify workable solutions.

WHO: (INSERT NAME AND TITLE OF PUBLIC OFFICIAL)
(INSERT NAME AND TITLE OF REPRESENTATIVE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION)
(INSERT NAMES AND TITLES OF ONE OR TWO OTHER NEWSWORTHY PARTICIPANTS)

WHEN: (INSERT DATE)
(INSERT TIME)

WHERE: (INSERT LOCATION)

(INSERT DATE OF DISTRIBUTION)

NEWS RELEASE

Instructions for use of **News Release**:

- 1) **Localize News Release:** Substitute local information in the news releases below, reproduce copies on your letterhead or news release paper to inform media that your local public official has proclaimed that April is NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month in your community.
- 2) **Distribution of Release:** Give the news releases to press covering the proclamation ceremony. Send copies to the city desks of your local newspapers and to the assignment editors at your local radio and television stations. They should receive the releases shortly before the events take place. Even if they don't send a reporter, a story can be written.

SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE TO ANNOUNCE: NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month:

For More Information, Contact:

(INSERT NAME & TITLE OF LOCAL CONTACT)

(INSERT PHONE NUMBER)

For Release (INSERT DATE AND TIME OF EVENT):

(INSERT NAME OF OFFICIAL) PROCLAIMS
NCADD ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH IN (INSERT NAME OF COMMUNITY)
AND JOINS NATIONAL CAMPAIGN TO END UNDERAGE DRINKING

(INSERT NAME AND TITLE OF PUBLIC OFFICIAL) today, (INSERT DATE), proclaimed that April is NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month in (INSERT NAME OF AREA) and joined the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) in a national grassroots campaign to highlight the critical public health issue of underage drinking in America and to provide healthy solutions.

"(INSERT QUOTE ABOUT UNDERAGE DRINKING FROM PUBLIC OFFICIAL)" said (INSERT NAME OF PUBLIC OFFICIAL).

"(INSERT QUOTE DESCRIBING LOCAL EFFORTS TO END UNDERAGE DRINKING FROM REPRESENTATIVE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION)" said (INSERT NAME AND TITLE OF REPRESENTATIVE OF YOUR ORGANIZATION).

(INSERT PARAGRAPH ABOUT LOCAL NCADD ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH ACTIVITIES).

NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month, sponsored by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) since 1987, encourages local communities to take action to end underage drinking.

(INSERT PARAGRAPH DESCRIBING YOUR ORGANIZATION)

(INSERT DATE OF DISTRIBUTION)

**SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE TO ANNOUNCE:
Alcohol-Free Weekend:**

For More Information, Contact:
(INSERT NAME & TITLE OF LOCAL CONTACT)
(INSERT PHONE NUMBER)

For Immediate Release:

ALCOHOL-FREE WEEKEND TO BE OBSERVED APRIL 3-5, 2009

Alcohol-Free Weekend, traditionally observed during NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month in April, is scheduled for April 3-5, 2009.

The National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) and (INSERT NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION) asks parents and other adults to abstain from drinking alcoholic beverages for a 72-hour period to demonstrate to young people that alcohol isn't necessary to have a good time. If participants find it difficult to go without a drink during this period, they are urged to call (INSERT YOUR PHONE NUMBER) for information about alcoholism.

(INSERT PARAGRAPH ABOUT WHAT YOUR ORGANIZATION IS DOING TO HELP THE COMMUNITY OBSERVE ALCOHOL-FREE WEEKEND)

NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month, sponsored by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) since 1987, is observed by communities throughout the United States and is a national grassroots effort to support research, education, intervention and treatment for alcoholism and alcohol-related problems.

NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month offers community organizations concerned about young people and families an opportunity to work together to not only raise awareness and understanding about the negative consequences of underage drinking, but to highlight the need for local action and intervention.

(INSERT PARAGRAPH ABOUT YOUR ORGANIZATION)

(INSERT DATE OF DISTRIBUTION)

:30 RADIO PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

Instructions for use:

- 1) **Localize PSA:** Adapt any or all of the "live copy" radio scripts for local use.
- 2) **Finalize Script:** Type each script, double-spaced, on your letterhead with the name of a contact person from your organization.
- 3) **Distribution of PSAs:** Try to submit scripts to radio public service directors in your community by mid-late February. Your chances of getting them aired may increase if you give each radio station a different set of scripts.
- 4) **Media Follow-Up:** Follow up with a phone call to the public service director 3-5 days after you submit the scripts asking if they have arrived and if broadcast during April will be possible.
- 5) **Media Reminder:** If the public service director was receptive to your first phone call, follow up with an additional call in late March to remind him/her of the PSA.
- 6) **Thank You:** Very important! Send a thank you note to the manager of any radio station that airs one of your PSAs.

SAMPLE LIVE COPY SCRIPTS:

April is NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc, (NCADD) and the (INSERT NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION) wants parents to know that underage progress is being made in the struggle against underage drinking. In fact, 83% of adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 do not drink at all; 90% don't binge drink; and 98% are not heavy drinkers. To join us in "**Our Children, Our Future: Underage Drinking is a Community Responsibility**" in (INSERT NAME OF AREA), call (INSERT YOUR PHONE NUMBER). That's (REPEAT PHONE NUMBER).

April is NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc, (NCADD) and the (INSERT NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION) wants young people to remember that you don't have to drink if you don't want to. Who says party animals have to set the agenda? For more information about ending underage drinking in (INSERT NAME OF AREA), call (INSERT YOUR PHONE NUMBER). That's (REPEAT PHONE NUMBER).

April is NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc, (NCADD) and the (INSERT NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION) reminds you that alcohol is the deadliest drug for America's teenagers: a 16-year old is more likely to die from a drinking-related problem than any other cause. For more information about how you can save a life and end underage drinking in (INSERT NAME OF AREA), call (INSERT YOUR PHONE NUMBER). That's (REPEAT PHONE NUMBER). Let this be your call to action.

April is NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc, (NCADD) and the (INSERT NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION) reminds you that drinking is associated with the leading causes of death among young people, including car crashes, murder and suicide. To keep our future growing in (INSERT NAME OF AREA), call (INSERT YOUR PHONE NUMBER). That's (REPEAT PHONE NUMBER). Let's end underage drinking.

April is NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc, (NCADD) and the (INSERT NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION) reminds you that the vast majority of students don't know that a standard mixed drink, a glass of table wine and a can of beer all contain the same amount of alcohol. For more information about how you can end underage drinking in (INSERT NAME OF AREA), call (INSERT YOUR PHONE NUMBER). That's (REPEAT PHONE NUMBER). Let's keep our future growing.

April is NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc, (NCADD) and the (INSERT NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION) reminds you that despite the legal drinking age of 21, high school students still consume 31 million gallons of wine coolers and 102 million gallons of beer each year. For more information about how to end underage drinking in (INSERT NAME OF AREA), call (INSERT YOUR PHONE NUMBER). That's (REPEAT PHONE NUMBER). Let's keep our future growing.

April is NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc, (NCADD) and the (INSERT NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION) reminds you that even though most teenagers know that you should not drink and drive, nearly a third still accepts rides from drivers who have been drinking. For more information about how to keep our future alive in (INSERT NAME OF AREA), call (INSERT YOUR PHONE NUMBER). That's (REPEAT PHONE NUMBER).

April is NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc, (NCADD) and the (INSERT NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION) reminds you that nearly 2/3 of teenagers who drink -- including those as young as 12 or 13 -- report that they can walk into a store and buy their own alcoholic beverages. For more information about how to end underage drinking, call (INSERT YOUR PHONE NUMBER). That's (REPEAT PHONE NUMBER). Let's keep our future growing.

April is NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month and the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc, (NCADD) and the (INSERT NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION) offers you several tragic reasons besides the law to take underage drinking seriously: highway death, drowning, suicide, violent injury and unwanted pregnancy. For more information about how you can end underage drinking in (INSERT NAME OF AREA), call (INSERT YOUR PHONE NUMBER). That's (REPEAT PHONE NUMBER). Let's keep our future growing.

April is NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month and if you think your child is drinking to have a good time with friends, think again: many kids drink alone because they are bored or depressed. This puts them at greater risk for developing alcoholism. To keep a kid's future growing and end underage drinking in (INSERT NAME OF AREA), call (INSERT YOUR PHONE NUMBER). That's (REPEAT PHONE NUMBER).

OP-ED PIECE

Instructions for use:

- 1) **Contact Person:** Call the editorial page of the most widely circulated newspaper in your city. Ask if they accept "op-ed" pieces and find out the name of the person to whom they should be directed.
- 2) **Write Op Ed:** Type the sample cover letter, on your organization's letterhead, for signature by one of your board members or the head of your organization. Type the sample op-ed double-spaced on blank paper. Submit both the cover letter and the op-ed to the appropriate person.
- 3) **Follow-Up:** Follow up with a phone call to the appropriate person several days later. Ask if the op-ed has arrived and whether it is being considered for publication.
- 4) **Denied, Try Again:** If your initial attempt is unsuccessful, repeat the process with other newspapers in your area, but make sure that no more than one newspaper at a time is considering your op ed. If a newspaper does not agree to publish it, submit the op-ed to other newspapers.
- 5) **Copies to NCADD:** Send copies of any press or published op-ed (as e-mail attachment preferred) to:
Robert J. Lindsey, M.Ed., CEAP
President/CEO
NCADD
244 East 58th Street, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10022
E-Mail: president@ncadd.org.

SAMPLE OP-ED COVER LETTER:

Dear Editor:

April is NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month. Following the leadership of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD), hundreds of communities throughout the country are joining together to focus on the critical public health issue of underage drinking. (INSERT NAME OF YOUR ORGANIZATION) is leading that effort locally.

And the news is not all bad.

We hope that you will consider publishing the enclosed op-ed piece to stimulate discussion about one of the most important public health issues in (INSERT NAME OF YOUR COMMUNITY).

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,
(INSERT NAME & TITLE)
(INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION)

SAMPLE OP-ED:

OUR CHILDREN, OUR FUTURE: UNDERAGE DRINKING IS A COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY

Before another high school student dies in an alcohol-related accident or a another college student dies of alcohol poisoning, the seriousness of the public health problem of underage drinking needs to be brought once more into the spotlight of public awareness.

Alcohol is the drug most frequently used by American teenagers. Young people drink alcohol more frequently than they use all other illicit drugs combined and alcohol is the drug responsible for more than **6,500 deaths per year**: motor vehicle accidents account for 2,400 deaths, unintentional death by fire, falls, overdose account for 2,400 deaths, homicides account for 1,600 deaths and suicide accounts for about 300 deaths per year!

Underage drinking is a critical public health issue in America. Alcohol is a drug that can affect judgment, coordination and long-term health. In fact, recent scientific research suggests that early use of alcohol by teenagers may contribute significantly to dependence on alcohol and other drugs later in life, with 40% of children who begin using alcohol before the age of 13 becoming alcohol dependent at some point in their lives.

Yet there are too many who dismiss underage drinking as a “youthful indiscretion” or a rite of passage from adolescence into adulthood, and many underage drinkers are often first presented with alcohol in their own dining rooms, living rooms and kitchens. Alcohol is strongly marketed to underage drinkers and associated with athletic and social events popular with high school and college students. Establishments knowingly serve underage drinkers, often with a wink and a nod to fake identification.

The annual economic cost of underage drinking is estimated to be nearly **\$ 62 billion**. And, underage drinking accounted for at least 16% of alcohol sales in 2001.

“Alcohol is a drug -- a powerful, mood-altering drug – and alcoholism is a disease,” says Dr. Robert Morse, Board member of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) and recently retired from the world-famous Mayo Clinic where he was Director of Addictive Disorders. “Over the past two decades, scientific research has revolutionized our understanding of how drugs affect the brain. We now know that prolonged, repeated drug and alcohol use can result in fundamental, long-lasting changes in brain structure and functioning.”

This is one of the reasons underage drinking is so critical. Not only are there a whole set of increased risks in the short-term, including traffic crashes, violent crime, burns, drowning, suicide attempts, fetal alcohol syndrome, alcohol poisonings and high-risk sexual behavior, if an underage drinker is able to make it out of adolescence and into adulthood, the long-term physical and biochemical effects put these drinkers at risk for the rest of their lives.

“Progress has been made, however,” says Robert J. Lindsey, President/CEO of the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) “and recent declines in past-month alcohol consumption and binge drinking rates among high school students are encouraging.” Citing figures from the most recent University of Michigan “**Monitoring the Future**” study, Lindsey notes that alcohol use among eighth graders, tenth graders, and high school seniors fell from previous years, offering some hope for the future. “We all have a stake in keeping this number on the decline,” says Lindsey. “We need to educate ourselves – as parents, teachers, counselors, friends – that the earlier children are exposed to the adverse effects of addictive substances such as alcohol, the greater the probability of a alcoholism and addiction.”

While the issue of underage drinking is a complex problem, one which can only be solved through a sustained and cooperative effort between parents, schools, community leaders, and the children themselves, there are four areas which have proven to be effective in prevention and intervention of underage drinking:

- 1). curtailing the availability of alcohol to underage populations;
- 2). consistent enforcement of existing laws and regulations regarding alcohol purchase; and
- 3). changing cultural misconceptions and behaviors about alcohol use through education
- 4). expanded access to treatment and recovery support for adolescents.

“As a society, we’ve got to do a far better job increasing awareness and understanding among the public and our young people that underage alcohol use is extremely risky behavior, not only in their own lives, but with the lives of friends, neighbors, and loved ones,” says Lindsey. “Underage drinking is not a rite of passage and each and every one of us have a responsibility to support expanded community efforts.”

For over 60 years, NCADD has been a source of Help, Hope and Healing for millions of individuals and families who have been affected by alcoholism and drug dependence. “Please join us, in saving lives as we work to reduce and prevent underage drinking.”

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Instructions for use:

- 1) **Write Letter:** Use the sample letter below to create your own letter, with local information, on your own letterhead and have it signed by the head of your organization.
- 2) **Submit and Follow-Up:** Submit the letter to the editor of the most widely read newspaper in your area. Follow up with a phone call to the letters department to ask if the letter has arrived and whether it is being considered for publication.
- 3) **Denied, Try Again:** If the letter is rejected, submit it to the editors of other daily and weekly newspapers, one at a time, in your area.

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE EDITOR:

Dear Editor:

April is National NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month. Sponsored by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) for 23 years, the theme this year is focused on underage drinking: **"Our Children, Our Future: Underage Drinking is a Community Responsibility"**.

No substance of abuse is more widely used and abused in America by persons under the age of 21 than alcohol, making underage drinking a leading public health problem in the United States.

The personal tragedies, social consequences, and economic costs associated with underage drinking are unacceptably high.

Addressing this issue requires a sustained and cooperative effort between parents, schools, colleges, community leaders, and our youth. The widespread prevalence of underage drinking and the negative consequences it creates remains a stubborn and destructive problem despite decades of efforts to combat it. Yet, there are three areas that have proven to be effective in prevention of this problem: curtailing the availability of alcohol to underage populations; consistent enforcement of existing laws and regulations regarding alcohol purchase; and changing cultural misconceptions and behaviors about alcohol use through education.

But, time is running out. Studies reveal that alcohol consumption by adolescents results in brain damage – possibly permanent – and impairs intellectual development. So, let's get started with the solution. We can't afford to wait any longer.

Sincerely,

(INSERT NAME & TITLE)

(INSERT NAME OF ORGANIZATION)

SUGGESTED GRASSROOTS ACTIVITIES

FOR STATES:

- * Issue an NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month proclamation on underage drinking (see sample) from the Governor's Office.
- * Pass keg registration laws that enable police to identify and impose sanctions against establishments that sell kegs of beer to underage drinkers, or individuals who purchase kegs for the purpose of providing them to underage drinkers.

FOR COMMUNITIES:

- * Issue an NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month proclamation on underage drinking (see sample) from the Mayor's Office.
- * Offer public recognition to young people who lead alcohol and other drug-free lifestyles.
- * Observe "Alcohol-Free Weekend" (see sample news release). In some communities, family-oriented businesses provide discounts or free admission to members of the community who have signed a pledge to remain alcohol-free with an organization that works to prevent alcoholism and other drug addictions.
- * Partner with local businesses (including fast food restaurants, book, video and music stores, movie theaters, skating rinks, bowling alleys and miniature golf courses) for alcohol-free youth events or promotions.
- * Schedule "Parent Empowerment Workshops" to raise their level of awareness and understanding of issues surrounding family recovery; to teach how adult role models both within and outside the family can influence young people; to look at the effect of advertising; and to show how every parent can do his/her part to change social attitudes. These workshops will help parents maintain standards of conduct, let participants know that other parents support their standards and encourage members of the community to support and encourage recovery. They can be hosted by the PTA, churches, service clubs, and taken to local business. Hold them during the day, at lunch, at night or on weekends.
- * Sponsor a "**Safe Homes**" campaign, enlisting parents to pledge that they will not serve alcohol to minors in their homes (Contact: Erie County Council for the Prevention of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, Inc. (ECCPASA) Healthy Families and Training Resource Center, 4255 Harlem Road, Amherst, NY, 14226, 716-839-1157 or www.eccpasa.info/safehomes.htm).
- * Review school rules regarding the use of alcohol, paying particular attention to athletic codes, and determine if the rules are adequately enforced.

- * Organize an Alcohol Awareness parade or rally.
- * Counter the pressures on young people to drink through after-school programs, good recreational facilities, alternative education programs for potential school drop-outs, job training, confidential health services and community service opportunities.
- * Insert a list of self-help groups and local resources with public utility bills.
- * Plan an NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month luncheon at a local hospital with guest speakers who represent the health community.

FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOLS:

- * Organize alcohol-free extracurricular activities, sporting events, dances and rock concerts, using promotional items such as t-shirts and hats, and promote them to other students as alcohol-free activities.
- * Use liners in school cafeteria trays to promote NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month.
- * Ask local grocery stores to provide quantities of grocery bags to schools and ask students to illustrate these bags with NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month messages. Return the illustrated bags to the grocery stores for use with customers during April.
- * Raise money for alcohol prevention curricula and public education campaigns through school walk-a-thons, raffles, athletic events, auctions, concerts, plant and rummage sales, and dinners.
- * Guidance counselors can develop a checklist regarding college alcohol policies to assist students and parents in their selection of schools.
- * Administrators can examine advertising solicited by the school, including student newspapers and yearbooks, to assure that there is a consistent and appropriate message regarding no use of alcohol. They can also examine policy that is used in the selection of favors for dances to assure that there is a consistent no-use message for people under the age of 21. If a change in these policies seems advisable, use NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month as an opportunity to announce them.
- * Teachers can offer instruction on critical skills for watching television and understanding selling techniques and commercials during NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month. Ask students to clip print advertisements for alcoholic beverages and bring them to class for discussion. Students can learn that drinking isn't a way to feel or be "independent." Rather, students can learn that they are being "influenced" to drink and that independence from advertising influences really means not drinking. Also ask students to prepare a list of other "pro-drinking" influences, including sponsorships of sporting events and rock concerts, and promotional items such as t-shirts and hats.

FOR STUDENTS:

- * Remember that use of alcohol is your decision and that drinking is not necessary for having a good time.
- * Know that drinking too much too fast can kill you and that alcohol poisoning, a drug overdose, is more common than many people think.
- * Avoid situations where someone else's alcohol consumption or other drug use may put you at risk.
- * Always respect another person's decision not to drink.

FOR COLLEGES:

- * Raise awareness of the fact that alcohol--by far the drug of choice for college students -- and binge drinking are key factors in academic and social problems on American campuses. Recognize the link between serious campus problems and alcohol: vandalism, date rape, poor academic performance, dropouts, injuries and death.
- * Appoint a task force consisting of school administrators, faculty, students, Greek system representatives and others to make recommendations for a broad range of policy and program changes that would serve to reduce alcohol- and other drug-related problems, and provide the resources necessary for implementing and promoting such changes.
- * Provide maximum opportunities for students to live in an alcohol-free environment and to engage in stimulating, alcohol-free recreational and leisure activities. Increase programming and social activities at the beginning of the academic year when students may be more susceptible to high risk drinking.
- * Enforce a "zero tolerance" policy on the illegal consumption of alcohol by students both on and off campus and take steps to reduce the opportunities for students, faculty, staff and alumni to legally consume alcohol on campus by limiting places and times for drinking; prohibiting drunkenness; regulating conditions of use; and not sanctioning a "bar" on campus.
- * Establish alcohol education programs on college campuses that include information on alcoholism prevention and treatment, and stress the non-use of alcohol as a healthy and viable option.
- * Ban alcohol sales at sporting arenas, or establish alcohol-free seating sections.
- * Eliminate alcoholic beverage advertising and promotion in all forms from university and college campuses, including alcohol industry sponsorship of college activities.

- * Form "Town/Gown" alliances with community leaders to encourage commercial establishments that promote or sell alcoholic beverages to curtail illegal student access to alcohol and adopt responsible alcohol marketing and service practices.
- * Encourage prevention efforts by having students and faculty direct studies in their discipline toward college drinking problems.
- * Organize and promote alcohol-free activities during spring break.

FOR FRATERNITIES AND SORORITIES:

- * Sponsor non-alcoholic rush or membership recruitment activities.
- * Ban alcohol from events where minors are likely to be present.

FOR MEDIA:

- * If you work for a radio or television station, do what you can to urge the owners to follow the leads of the major television networks who have agreed not to accept advertising for distilled spirits.
- * Broadcast or publish relevant information (see radio PSAs, op ed piece and letter to the editor).
- * For a week-long period during NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month analyze all news stories for mention of alcohol. Aside from such obvious stories as alcohol-related traffic fatalities, pay particular attention to violent crime, domestic violence, sexual abuse, suicide and other social issues where use of alcohol is likely to be involved. Then do a "round-up" story about the negative consequences of alcohol consumption illustrated by the evidence in your community.
- * Counter and challenge stereotyping and glamorization of members of the journalism and entertainment professions as hard-drinking "heroes" by identifying leaders of your profession who do not engage in these practices, and by reporting the lost health, careers and lives of those who do.

FOR RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATIONS AND GROUPS:

- * Integrate alcohol issues into the ongoing religious education of young people.
- * Encourage role models who have achieved success without using/abusing alcohol to participate in congregation-sponsored events.

- * Allow use of your facilities for alternative youth activities, mentoring programs, parent training, stress management seminars, healthy lifestyles workshops and substance abuse prevention education sessions.
- * Assemble an "NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month" bulletin board. Ask members of your congregation to bring in news clippings of alcohol-related incidents in your community. Tell them to look for mentions of alcohol, particularly in crime stories.
- * Conduct a candlelight vigil/parade or sponsor an Ecumenical Prayer Breakfast that focuses on the healing effects of treatment for all family members.
- * Publish information about recovery programs in church bulletins.
- * Religious groups can establish an "Amnesty Day/Week" at their houses of worship for youth who need help but are embarrassed, afraid or don't know where to get it. Help and/or referrals can be provided confidentially and without fear of reprisal.

FOR PARENTS:

- * Teach your child that abstinence from alcohol is an acceptable lifelong decision and that they have a right to stand up for a safe academic environment.
- * Teach your child that drinking can be risky and to intervene when they see that their classmates are in trouble.
- * If your child is of legal age to drink (21 in all states), explain to them how to use alcohol moderately (no more than two drinks per day for men, no more than one for women) and appropriately (as a complement to a meal and at social gatherings or during family celebrations).
- * If you drink, be sure to set an ongoing healthy example regarding adult alcohol use and never brag about your use of alcohol or other drugs during your own college years.
- * When helping your children to select an appropriate college, be willing to question officials about campus alcohol policies. The Best Colleges, an annual guide published by the Princeton Review, groups schools by categories ("Lots of beer," "Lots of hard liquor," "Major frat and sorority scene" and "Stone-cold sober schools").
- * When your children go to college, set clear and realistic expectations regarding academic performance, and continue to be as interested and involved in their lives as you were when they were in high school.