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## **WITH SPRING BREAK LOOMING, OREGON PARTNERSHIP POINTS TO UNDERAGE DRINKING AS MAJOR HEALTH PROBLEM. CALLING FOR CHANGE IN PUBLIC ATTITUDES.**

**On the heels of the U.S. Surgeon General's "Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking," Oregon Partnership says TV shows, web sites, and alcoholic beverage companies need to stop promoting spring break binge drinking.**

(Portland, Ore.) As research about the neurological dangers of underage drinking becomes more publicized, Oregon Partnership is calling for a change in public attitudes on the acceptance of spring break drinking by college students.

"Young people getting drunk during spring break has practically become an industry in itself, helped along by massive amounts of marketing," says Pam Erickson, deputy director of Oregon Partnership, a state-wide non profit providing drug and alcohol prevention education and treatment referral.

"It's about time that everyone from major media conglomerates to companies providing on line travel packages realize that it's beyond irresponsible to promote drinking to college students who are not yet 21."

Excessive alcohol use by young people has a host of dangerous short-term consequences, but now research shows that alcohol use can lead to problems longer-term. Thanks to magnetic resonance imaging, we now know that substantial brain development occurs during the teen years and that the brain is not fully developed until about age 25.

"The younger a person is when they start to regularly consume alcohol," says Erickson, "the more likely they are to develop alcoholism later. Young people tend to become addicted faster than adults."

It isn't unusual for spring break ads to highlight "free drinks" and "all you can drink." And a recent Travel Channel special touted Mexican destinations as Rosarita Beach and Cabo San Lucas choice spring break spots because of the lower drinking age of 18.

In the words of J. Edward Hill, president of the American Medical Association, "Spring Break has turned into a dangerous binge-fest...and students are bombarded by promotions on campus that are loaded with ads for cheap or free alcohol."

What can we do about it?

- \* Parents: talk to your college student about the dangers of these situations and think twice about agreeing to finance a trip for your under-21 college student.
- \* Ask colleges and universities not to allow ads which promote travel that involves underage drinking and excessive alcohol consumption.
- \* Ask companies that promote underage drinking and over consumption during spring break to stop the practice and embrace responsible drinking (which means no underage drinking).

The recent Surgeon General Report includes several policy recommendations aimed at reducing college drinking, including evens sponsored by alcoholic beverage companies and an end to alcohol ads in college publications.

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