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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE FROM OREGON PARTNERSHIP*****

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**TOWN HALLS ACROSS OREGON TACKLE UNDERAGE DRINKING AS
MAJOR PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM!**

**34 TOWN HALL MEETINGS THROUGHOUT STATE STARTING NEXT
WEEK AS PART OF NATIONAL EFFORT**

**TWO PORTLAND TV STATIONS TO AIR LOCALLY-PRODUCED SPECIAL
ON UNDERAGE DRINKING**

(Portland, Oregon) With underage drinking continuing to qualify as a leading public health problem across the United States, communities across Oregon are sponsoring town halls throughout the month of April to learn more about the issue and helping to reverse the trend.

Most of the town halls, sponsored by the national Interagency Coordinating Committee for the Prevention of Underage Drinking, are being put on by various anti-drug coalitions throughout the state. It is part of a nationwide

Students, parents, educators, and members of the business and religious communities will be taking part, as well as others involved in helping to prevent underage drinking. Hundreds of town halls aimed at underage drinking prevention are being held around the country as part of Alcohol Awareness Month.

Among the some 34 town halls around the state are several in the Portland area, including

***Tigard Turns The Tide Coalition Town Hall, 7 p.m., April 3rd at Tigard High School.** Contact: Jill Webb 503-984-6822

***Beaverton Together Town Hall, 4 p.m. April 15th at Sunset High School.** Contact: Connie Ramaekers, 503-431-4022

A list of Oregon town halls with contact information can be found in the link below:

<http://www.stopalcoholabuse.gov/townhall/flashmap/2008/eventlist.aspx?id=39>

In conjunction with the town halls, television stations KPTV(Fox 12) and KPDX(PDX 49) will be producing a half-hour special, “Underage Drinking: A Call to Action” to air on Sunday, April 27th.

The program will be shown at 6 p.m. on KPTV and 9 p.m. on KPDX.

KPTV will also be producing a series of stories on underage drinking to air in their newscasts throughout the month and will be shown again during the specials.

About a third of Oregon 8th graders have consumed alcohol in the past month, and binge drinking on college campuses is practically an epidemic. A recent U.S. Surgeon General’s report found that underage drinking is viewed as a rite of passage and facilitated by adults.

Youth who start drinking before the age of fifteen are four times as likely to become addicted as adults compared to those who wait until the age of twenty one.

But parents need to understand that they are the biggest influence in children’s lives, and the more they talk to their children about the dangers of drugs and underage drinking (and the conversation should start in grade school!), the less likely their kids will give in to peer pressure.

Alcohol use is associated with the leading causes of death of young people. According to the Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, underage drinking costs Oregonians \$697 million a year in medical costs, pain and suffering and work loss costs.