



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Start Talking...the Sooner the Better**

Eau Claire, Wisconsin – April 7, 2014. The sixth annual Parents Who Host Campaign reminds parents that underage drinking is unhealthy, unsafe, and illegal. The campaign theme this year, “Start talking, the sooner the better,” encourages parents to start talking with their kids about alcohol use at an early age and share their strong disapproval of underage drinking. Talking earlier is important because kids in Eau Claire County start drinking at an average of 13 years old. 67% of kids who drink alcohol before age 15 eventually do other drugs.

“The time to talk to your kids about alcohol use is long before they are tempted,” shares Eau Claire parent, Bruce King. “The conversations about drinking needs to happen before kids are tempted, and need to be revisited as your children move from elementary to middle to high school.” Experts now recommend starting to talk with your kids about alcohol as early as 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade. Parents who are unsure about how to talk with their kids about alcohol regardless of their age can go to the Alliance for Substance Abuse website ([www.getinvolvedASAP.org](http://www.getinvolvedASAP.org)). There are ideas and conversation starters for parents to use with kids of different ages.

Once the conversation has started, look for natural opportunities to keep it going. Teen alcohol use is often included in song lyrics, a TV show plot, or media reports. When the topic comes up, use it to share your disapproval and to check for understanding of consequences by asking a few questions. Good questions include the what, when, and why of the situation. Following up with a question about what could make the situation different can help kids see that different choices can change what happens. According to Kristin Hildebrand, Underage Drinking Prevention Coordinator, “Parents need to help kids interpret what they see, especially when it comes to the topic of alcohol. This is another reason why we need to start talking.”

“The notion that underage drinking isn’t a big deal because ‘I did it and turned out OK’ is no longer tenable” according to Gregg Kishaba, a local pediatrician. “We now know that a teen who starts drinking before the age of 13 has a 45% chance of becoming alcohol dependent vs a 7% chance if they wait until 21 years of age. Alcohol causes both biochemical and structural changes in the teen age brain, putting them at a higher risk for addiction.”

Kishaba shares the importance of parents talking with their kids and making their disapproval clear. “I remember asking a high school senior how much alcohol she was drinking and she replied, ‘None. My mom would kill me.’ There is so much power in this statement. Studies have shown that strong

parental disapproval is the number one reason why teens choose not to drink.” Parents have more influence than they realize. Parents need to use that influence to keep their kids from drinking.

Parents and other adults are asked to:

- Share strong disapproval of underage drinking.
- Use natural opportunities from movies, TV shows, and media reports to remind kids of their strong disapproval and expectations.
- Join the 700 Parent Connecting Network Members and commit to not providing alcohol to those under 21 in their home or on their property.

This year’s *Parents Who Host Lose the Most Campaign* is a county-wide effort sponsored by the Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention. The Alliance, at the Eau Claire City-County Health Department, is a coalition working to improve the lives of children, youth, and adults by mobilizing communities to prevent and treat alcohol, tobacco, and other drug abuse in Eau Claire County. The Alliance includes members from Altoona, Augusta, Eau Claire, and Fall Creek. The Drug Free Communities Program provides federal funding for this campaign. *Parents Who Host Lose the Most: Don’t be a party to teenage drinking* was developed by the Drug-Free Action Alliance in Ohio.

**To become involved in efforts to reduce underage drinking, please contact Kristin Hildebrand at [Kristin.hildebrand@co.eau-claire.wi.us](mailto:Kristin.hildebrand@co.eau-claire.wi.us) or 715-839-2874.**

