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### **Underage Drinking: A Community Approach for Change**

*MARIETTA, GA* (August 6, 2009) – Media coverage of the recent court case resulting in a Mom sentenced to 18 months in jail for providing alcohol to minors should cause us all to reflect on our beliefs about underage drinking and how we contribute to preventing or perpetuating it.

Think underage drinking doesn't affect you? Think again. Find out. Speak up. There are serious effects of underage drinking on public health, safety, crime and quality of life, costing Georgia citizens about \$1.5 billion annually. Private parties or gatherings are reported as the primary source by which youth obtain alcohol. Adult attitudes, beliefs and behaviors have been identified as conditions contributing to the problem. Feeling guilty, worried, anxious or helpless is not productive, and focusing solely on educating youth to prevent the problem is ineffective. There is a significant body of evidence identifying effective preventive enforcement, policy and education strategies.

The Cobb Alcohol Taskforce has prepared a twelve page newspaper especially for parents and adults. Content includes the latest research and information on alcohol and judgment, parental influence on use of alcohol, how alcohol effects the teenage brain, and proven strategies for preventing underage and youth binge drinking such as those used in the Cobb Safe Neighborhoods Safe Homes Campaign. The publication is being distributed by local PTA's and other community organizations and in middle and high schools at back-to-school events throughout Cobb County and Marietta City School Systems, and is also available at [www.cobbat.org](http://www.cobbat.org).

“I believe hope, healing and change are on the horizon for Cobb County”, said Cathy Finck, Coordinator of the Cobb Alcohol Taskforce. The Cobb Alcohol Taskforce has identified opportunities for preventing and reducing underage and youth binge drinking, requiring a long-term commitment and a comprehensive community approach for change. People young and old

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and from all walks of life can join in promoting the taskforce’s strategic education, policy and enforcement goals for change. Information, resources and tools can be found on the Cobb Alcohol Taskforce website at [www.cobbat.org](http://www.cobbat.org).

“Recent innovative actions by several Cobb Alcohol Taskforce partners are worth noting for helping to create effective change for the future”, said Finck. “Cobb County School Board approval of amendments to its’ district policy with more stringent consequences for student infractions involving alcohol could effectively deter underage drinking, if rules are applied consistently. And, Georgia PTA approval of a resolution in support of ‘social host’ laws and ordinances could begin leveraging local and state social-political support for such policies proven effective at deterring adults from providing alcohol to minors.”

Cobb Alcohol Taskforce is an alliance of individuals and organizations which mobilizes and challenges Cobb County adults to reduce underage drinking and youth binge drinking, by advancing strategic enforcement, policy and education goals. For more information visit the website at [www.cobbat.org](http://www.cobbat.org) or call 404-791-7406.