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Cobb County Youth and Adults Recognized as Champions of Substance Abuse Prevention

Marietta, GA (March 31, 2009) – The Cobb Alcohol Taskforce in partnership with the Cobb Community Collaborative Drug-Free Communities Support Program co-hosted a community event to highlight local individuals and organizations working to prevent underage drinking and youth drug abuse. Attendees were treated to a reception and opportunity to mingle and visit with exhibitors from various public health, safety and community prevention groups. Joshua Luster, Kennesaw University Student, read letters sent to the group by Governor Sonny Perdue and Senator Johnny Isakson, encouraging, recognizing and appreciating local efforts to reduce substance abuse which is of concern to governments and citizens alike.

Cobb Police Department Chief, George Hatfield and Cobb County Sheriff's Office Colonel, Milton Beck, shared results of county-wide compliance check operations conducted on March 26th and recognized participating agencies. A total of 111 alcohol outlets were checked; with 10 violations reported, for a 91 percent rate of business compliance. Col. Beck said, "This recent compliance rate increase is one illustration of how coordinated enforcement efforts involving all the agencies have significant pay offs for the community." New strategies for the taskforce enforcement team include uniform data collection efforts and use of technology such as GIS mapping. "Together we're learning prevention strategies that can really assist taskforce agencies in the planning and implementing of enforcement activity that will effectively deter youth and adult behaviors of concern", said Chief Hatfield.

Dr. Brenda Rowe, Director of Prevention Services, Division of Public Health, Georgia Department of Human Resources, presented the First Annual Cobb County Substance Abuse Prevention Champion Awards to; the Cobb Community Collaborative Drug-Free Communities Support Program for their organization's achievements and outcomes in reducing past 30-day drug use among student survey respondents, and Jeff Inman, Cobb County School District's Prevention Intervention Center Coordinator, for being such an exemplary individual prevention leader and asset to the work of prevention in Cobb County for the past 17 years.

Youth team's who entered the 2nd Annual Youth Voice and Vision Public Service Announcement Competition shared their video entries. Youth teams walked the red carpet and

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were treated to star treatment complete with paparazzi and interviews. Youth team winners were announced and recognized with Oscar like fanfare and their winning video entries were viewed by an enthusiastic audience. Entries were judged in three categories; in the underage drinking prevention category, Marietta YELLS from Marietta High School received an honorable mention and Cobb Police Explorers was the winner; in the youth substance abuse prevention category, Pebblebrook Beta Club from Pebblebrook High School received an honorable mention and Osborne High School was the winner; in the prevention of other youth risky behaviors category, Osborne High School received an honorable mention and UMATTER from Cobb Community Services Board was the winner. Winning entries will air on Cobb Government TV23 and Cobb Education TV24 during April 2009.

Youth teams communicated effectively and showed that underage drinking, youth drug abuse and other youth risky behaviors are important issues needing the focused attention of adults. Pat Giuliani, Cobb Safe Neighborhoods/Safe Homes Coordinator, recognized thirty-three neighborhood associations and community organizations participating in this campaign, and said, "Private home parties are the primary source by which youth obtain alcohol, and often a source for other drug use and risky sexual behavior, violence and vandalism." She invited everyone to join and help grow the campaign. "Cobb Safe Neighborhoods/Safe Homes is the best of prevention at work in Cobb County and a win-win for youth, families, neighborhoods and the community at-large", said Giuilani.

The event raised awareness of community substance abuse problems and shined a spotlight on individuals and organizations implementing local solutions with measurable success. Cathy Finck, Cobb Alcohol Taskforce Coordinator and event co-host, said, "We are delighted at the participation and response to this event and we hope it will become an annual tradition to recognize that prevention is working in Cobb County and for raising awareness about both youth substance abuse problems and solutions."

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 new website at www.cobbat.org or call 404-791-7406.