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DVD Release Party: Cobb Students Celebrate Alcohol Awareness Month

MARIETTA, GA (April 20, 2009) – Cobb County middle and high school student actors, script writers and production assistants partied at the Northeast Cobb YMCA on Monday evening to celebrate the release of their DVD. It was produced for use with the Keepin' it REAL curriculum and as part of April 2009 Alcohol Awareness Month. More than 40 youth spent a total of 115 service hours in the production of the film.

Participating students from Dickerson, Dodgen, East Cobb, Hightower Trail middle schools and Pope and Lassiter high schools received gift cards, certificates of appreciation and copies of the DVD. Family members, production crew, community partners and Cobb County School District personnel joined in the fun and made an enthusiastic audience for the screening of the DVD.

The DVD was produced for use with Keepin' it REAL, a model SAMHSA (Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration) program. "Producing the DVD with local students and in familiar local settings will help the lessons seem more relevant and realistic", said Katie Love-Pride, Cobb Prevention Intervention Center GRAA Program Specialist. REAL stands for; Refuse to use alcohol, Explain why they won't use, Avoid situations where alcohol may be served, and Lease a situation where they may be tempted to use alcohol.

Keepin' it REAL is being implemented in four middle schools and three high schools as part of a Grant to Reduce Alcohol Abuse, awarded to the Cobb County School District by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug-free Schools. According to Georgia Student Health Survey data, 26 percent of Cobb students report their first use of alcohol between eighth and twelfth grade, with the average age of first use reported as 13 years old. "Waiting to be taught about alcohol and binge drinking until eleventh and twelfth grades places students at risk for early initiation", said Jeff Inman, Cobb School's Prevention Intervention Center Coordinator.

"We're pretty excited about the promising preliminary results from teaching this program

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to eighth graders at four East Cobb middle schools since January 2009”, said Amy Head, Cobb Prevention Intervention Center GRAA Program Specialist. “Students receiving this program report increased willingness to use refusal and avoidance skills, decreased perception that alcohol is needed to have fun at parties, and decreased alcohol use”, said Ms. Love-Pride.

“Amy and Katie are Keepin’ it REAL trainers and in year one are teaching the 10 classroom lessons to eighth graders and collecting data to measure program outcomes. In years two and three they will be responsible for teaching the 8th grade lessons, as well as coordinating the 9th grade booster sessions and monitoring the fidelity of program implementation”, said Mr. Inman.

In addition, another SAMHSA model program funded under the Grant to Reduce Alcohol Abuse is Communities Mobilizing for Change on Alcohol, which is being integrated into the structure and efforts of the Cobb Alcohol Taskforce. “We use three strategies; enforcement, policy and education, to accomplish three goals; reduce alcohol’s availability to minors, increase use of policies to deter underage and binge drinking, and decrease current social norms that support underage and binge drinking behaviors”, said Cathy Finck, Cobb Alcohol Taskforce Coordinator. “It is very encouraging to see one of our taskforce partners receive this grant and invest in evidence based prevention practices that will be measured and sustained over time. What a great activity to highlight as we celebrate Alcohol Awareness Month this April”, said Ms. Finck.

Alcohol Awareness Month has been sponsored by the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence since 1987. A primary focus of Alcohol Awareness Month over the years has been Underage Drinking and the devastating effects it can have on our youth. This year’s theme is “Saving Lives: Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking”.

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.