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15 Second Solution to Curb Student Alcohol Use
Keep High School Graduation Celebrations Safe and Alcohol-Free

Marietta, GA (May 14, 2009) – Cobb Alcohol Taskforce has purchased several PAS-IV passive alcohol sensors to be used for deterring underage drinking at local school and community events. These high-tech tools quickly “sniff” out alcohol to one-hundredth of one percent and are proving how technology can help combat underage drinking, save lives and money. Officers from Cobb and Marietta Schools demonstrated these "sniffer" flashlights, which detect presence of alcohol vapor, for the media recently. The instrument is held approximately 5-20 inches from a subject’s mouth. It works by quietly drawing in a person’s exhaled breath through an in-take valve. The air is pumped through a fuel cell, which generates a charge in response to alcohol vapor. If alcohol is detected, a color-coded meter on the side of the flashlight will light up. Depending on the level of alcohol detected, the light display will glow green, yellow or red. The entire passive alcohol screening process takes approximately 15 seconds. The capabilities of these instruments will also allow an Officer to determine if alcohol is present in an open container. They are designed to provide a means of screening such containers at school functions including graduations, athletic events, performance events, dances and proms.

“Students, administrators, teachers, coaches and parents support curbing student alcohol use at extra-curricular events with this quick, non-invasive screening instrument”, said James Arrowood, Director of Cobb School’s Department of Public Safety. “Officers appreciate how this tool provides an easy 15 second enforcement solution and also serves to deter student alcohol use at school functions”, said Director Arrowood.

Graduation is a good time to be reminded of the sobering facts of underage and youth binge drinking. Alcohol is the top threat to youth health and safety, contributing to the top three causes of death for youth each year; 6,000 alcohol-related injuries from car crashes, burns, drownings, and other causes, 1,500 homicides and 300 suicides. Underage drinking contributes to as many as two thirds of all youth sexual assaults and date rapes and to unprotected consensual sex resulting in unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS. It also contributes to injuries from fights, crashes, falls and burns and to alcohol abuse and addiction.

(More...)

For some graduates, celebrations involve lots of young people and alcohol. Teens may want to host a party where alcohol is served to their friends. Providing alcohol to a minor is illegal and could result in criminal and or civil penalties including 12 months in jail and a \$1,000 fine. “Underage drinking is not a rite-of-passage for high school graduates, it’s illegal. It’s also illegal for adults to host underage drinking parties”, said Cathy Finck, Cobb Alcohol Taskforce Coordinator. “Students report private home parties as the primary source by which youth obtain alcohol”, said Pat Giuliani, Cobb Safe Neighborhoods Safe Homes Campaign Coordinator. “Cobb Safe Neighborhoods Safe Homes is another tool that can assist in reducing underage drinking by combating and deterring adult social hosting of underage drinking parties”, said Ms. Giuliani.

“Law enforcement agencies within Cobb County are coordinating enforcement strategies focused on keeping youth and adult citizens safe this graduation season”, said Lt. Ken Davis, Cobb County Sheriff’s Office, and Enforcement Coordinator for the Cobb Alcohol Taskforce. Taskforce law enforcement agency partners received a 2009 Commencement Schedule from Cobb and Marietta Schools. Local high school commencement ceremonies will be held at various venues and times over next weekend, May 22 – 23. Officers and Deputies will be on alert and prepared to respond to citizen reports of underage drinking. Citizens are encouraged to make the call to report underage drinking parties. Calls can be anonymous. Call local police precincts or the Cobb County Sheriff’s Office at 770-499-4719 to report underage drinking parties.

To learn more about how to help keep students safe from alcohol related harms, please visit the Cobb Alcohol Taskforce website at www.cobbat.org. Take 2-3 minutes and complete the on-line survey which is open through May 31, 2009. The survey is designed to help assess citizen knowledge, belief and perspective on a variety of underage drinking social norms and institutional policies and will be used to inform future strategic decision-making.

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. Happy and Safe Graduation to the Class of 2009!