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**SPRING BREAK 2009 – LET’S MAKE IT SAFE**  
**Taskforce Offers Tips to Parents about Safe Spring Break Strategies**

MARIETTA, GA (March 31, 2009) – Spring break in Cobb County takes place from April 6 through April 10, and this is one of the highest-risk times of the year for underage drinking. Young people going on spring break trips that often include alcohol can suffer dangerous consequences. It is up to adults to end underage drinking and keep kids safe this spring break.

One local group offers tips for parents as spring break approaches. The Cobb Alcohol Taskforce has a list of eight recommendations to assist parents in making decisions and to help prevent underage drinking, especially during this time of year.

"Spring break is an especially vulnerable time for young people and we want parents to be prepared to help keep kids safe and alcohol-free," said Bonnie Brand, Cobb Alcohol Taskforce member. "Teenagers, and some parents and other adults, may think of underage drinking as an adolescent rite of passage," Brand said. "But it is not a harmless one. Parents and adults need to know the associated risks and take necessary action to protect kids."

Here are some of the dangerous consequences of underage drinking:

- Alcohol is a factor in the leading causes of death among adolescents; including unintentional accidents
- Alcohol is linked to as many as two-thirds of all sexual assaults and date rapes involving 13-20 year olds
- Alcohol is a major factor in unprotected sex among youth; increasing their risk for HIV, other STDs and unintended pregnancies
- Alcohol is linked to youth violence and crime; with more than 50 percent of juvenile justice cases involving alcohol

Statistics show that 10 million underage youth in the U.S. are drinking alcohol and they consume up to 20 percent of all the alcohol consumed in the U.S. Underage youth use alcohol at 10 times the rate of all illicit drugs combined, costing Georgians about \$1.5 billion annually.

(More,,)

Eight things parents need to know about Spring Break – 1) *be aware* of teens hitting the beaches overcrowded with other teens where drinking lots of alcohol is a featured activity, 2) *know the risks* of underage drinking which contributes to the leading causes of preventable death, injuries, crime, etc., 3) *plan ahead* and talk about your families expectations for appropriate spring break activities and destinations, 4) *listen carefully* to teens who press hard about heading to a ‘party’ spring break destination with friends as they are likely to be a current drinker, 5) *supervise teens* as it is the single most reliable method for reducing the risks associated with underage drinking, 6) *know your legal liability* as parent chaperones assume legal responsibility for teens in their care and can be held liable for results of teens’ misbehavior or for negligent parenting, 7) *understand marketing forces* spend lots of dollars on spring break packages advertising travel and drink specials with ‘youth appeal’, 8) *know who’s responsible* for keeping teens safe from the dangerous consequences of 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](http://www.cobbat.org) or call 404-791-7406.