



NCADD

NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND
DRUG DEPENDENCE, INC.

244 East 58th Street, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10022
212-269-7797 212-269-7510 Fax
www.ncadd.org

Media Update

For more Information: Contact:

Robert J. Lindsey, President/CEO
(212) 269-7797, ext. 19
e-mail: president@ncadd.org

For Immediate Release: March 24, 2009

OUR CHILDREN, OUR FUTURE: UNDERAGE DRINKING IS A COMMUNITY RESPONSIBILITY **APRIL IS NCADD ALCOHOL AWARENESS MONTH**

Annually, over **6,500 people** under the age of 21 die from alcohol-related injuries involving underage drinking and thousands more are injured! Almost 2,400 youth under 21 die in drinking and driving crashes, almost 2,400 die from other accidents, falls, fires etc., 1,500 die in alcohol-related homicides and 300 due to suicide.

Each April since 1987, the National Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc. (NCADD) has sponsored NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month to encourage local communities to focus on alcoholism and alcohol-related issues. This April, NCADD is highlighting the important public health issue of underage drinking, a problem with devastating consequences. Alcohol use by young people is extremely dangerous - both to themselves and to society, and it is associated with traffic fatalities, violence, unsafe sex, suicide, educational failure, and other problem behaviors.

Some important basic facts about underage drinking:

- Alcohol is the **number one drug of choice** for America's young people, more than tobacco or illicit drugs;
- Those who begin drinking **before age 15** are four times more likely to develop alcoholism than those who begin at age 21;
- Each day, **7,000 kids** in the United States under the **age of 16 take their first drink**.
- And, underage alcohol use costs the nation an estimated **\$62 billion annually!**

Reducing underage drinking is critical to securing a healthy future for America's youth and requires a cooperative effort from parents, schools, community organizations, business leaders, government agencies, the entertainment industry, alcohol manufacturers/retailers and young people. This year's theme for NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month is **"Our Children, Our Future: Underage Drinking is a Community Responsibility"** and it highlights the need to work together to create comprehensive education, prevention, intervention and treatment resources.

"The issue of underage drinking is a complex problem," says Robert J. Lindsey, President/CEO of NCADD, "one that can only be solved through a sustained and cooperative effort. But, if we care about the health and well being of our children, the bottom line, based on science, is that we need to do everything we can to discourage them from drinking alcohol for as long as possible."

Unfortunately, it remains relatively easy for teenagers to get access to alcohol and, despite serious concerns, kids are flooded with media messages that glamorize alcohol use, increasing the likelihood that they will drink themselves. In fact, underage drinking accounted for 16% of all alcohol sales in 2001.

"We need to wake up to the problem of underage drinking and recognize the reality that for some, alcoholism and addiction develop at a young age and that intervention, treatment, and recovery support are essential for them and their families," says Lindsey. "We can't afford to wait any longer."

An integral part of Alcohol Awareness Month is **Alcohol-Free Weekend** (April 3-5, 2009), which is designed to raise public awareness about the inappropriate use of alcohol and how it may be affecting individuals, families, and the community. During this seventy-two-hour period, NCADD extends an open invitation to all Americans, young and old, to participate in three alcohol-free days and to use this time to contact local NCADD Affiliates and other alcoholism agencies to learn more about alcoholism and its early symptoms.

For more information about NCADD, underage drinking, NCADD Alcohol Awareness Month and NCADD Alcohol-Free Weekend, visit the NCADD website at: www.ncadd.org.