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NEWS RELEASE

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State Launches Underage Drinking Prevention Campaign *Wave one begins Friday with spring break enforcement blitz*

Dover – April is an exciting time for teens with proms and spring break right around the corner. However, it can also be a dangerous one when alcohol enters the mix. Nine teens (ages 16 – 20) were killed and 101 injured in alcohol-related traffic crashes in 2007 according to Delaware crash statistics. Additionally 424 minors were arrested for DUI.

To prevent this senseless loss of life, particularly during this high risk time, Governor Jack Markell is announcing the launch of a statewide underage drinking prevention campaign, starting Friday April 10th. The campaign will begin with a weeklong statewide enforcement blitz coordinated by the Delaware Office of Highway Safety. 17 State and local police agencies will conduct DUI saturation patrols as well as “hot spot” patrols where they will look for gatherings of minors who are consuming alcohol. Some will also conduct Cops In Shops enforcement, where officers will go undercover in package stores to catch minors trying to buy alcohol.

“Protecting the public safety is one of our state government's most fundamental responsibilities,” said Governor Markell. “The enforcement blitz we are announcing today will do a lot to keep our teens, and all Delawareans on the road, safe. Spring break trips and the prom should be among the best memories of our teenagers' lives, not the most tragic.”

“We’re pleased to partner with the Governor’s office in this important traffic safety initiative,” said Tricia Roberts, Director of the Office of Highway Safety. “Alcohol continues to be a contributing factor in the deaths and injuries of our young people on Delaware roadways. These tragedies are particularly heart wrenching as they are 100% preventable.”

The campaign will be conducted in phases. Later in the month of April, OHS will send materials including posters, brochures, and incentive items with alcohol prevention information and messages on them to schools for teachers and students to distribute. Students will also notice underage drinking billboards going up near their school buildings. These efforts are being conducted in conjunction with prom activities.

Then in late May and June phase three of the campaign will include more enforcement surrounding graduation and beach week activities, as well as radio and internet messaging. This time though messages are aimed at parents. The ads, which will be recorded by Governor Markell, will let parents know that providing alcohol to minors is not only illegal but also damaging to a teenager's development.

"In past years, some parents have made the misguided decision to provide alcohol to their teenagers and their children's underage friends during the prom, graduation, and beach week," said Governor Markell. "That is a recipe for disaster!" A young person's body including their liver, and important judgment centers in their brains do not finish developing until their early 20's. Alcohol can impair their development and ability to make sound decisions.

According to past studies by the University of Delaware Center, 42% of 11th graders who were surveyed reported that they had attended parties where alcohol was provided by their friends' parents.

The following are a list of Delaware's penalties for various alcohol-related offenses involving minors:

- Underage Impaired Driving – loss of license for 2 months or \$200 fine if minor is driving without a license (1st offense). Penalties for minors with a Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) of .08 or higher may face more severe penalties.
- Underage Consumption or Possession – loss of license for 1 month or \$100 fine if unlicensed
- Using False Identification – up to \$500 fine or 30 days in jail if fine is not paid
- Entering a Bar or Package Store Underage - \$50 fine
- Providing a Minor with Alcohol – up to \$500 and 40 hours of community service

In 2008, 51 minors were arrested for a variety of alcohol offenses during statewide prom and graduation enforcement efforts.

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