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NEWS RELEASE

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**OHS Coordinates Underage Drinking Prevention Efforts to
Coincide with Prom Season**

Dover – Delaware’s prom season is kicking into high gear starting this weekend. While it’s an exciting time for most teens, it can also be a dangerous one when alcohol enters the mix. National statistics from the U.S. Department of Transportation reveal that 48 teens are killed and more than 5-thousand injured in prom weekend wrecks, many of them involving alcohol.

The Delaware Office of Highway Safety is coordinating an underage drinking prevention mobilization to run in conjunction with prom season. The goal is to make prom a safe and alcohol-free event for all Delaware high school students.

The underage drinking prevention campaign will run from April 21st through the end of May and includes enforcement efforts, paid media awareness, and school-based educational activities. According to highway safety officials, it’s critical to drive this message home now.

“Prom is a magical time for many high school students and we want it to be a safe event for everyone, so we’re sending the message now and very clearly that there is a zero tolerance policy in effect for anyone under the age of 21 when it comes to drinking and driving in Delaware,” said Lisa Moore, OHS’s Impaired Driving Prevention Coordinator.

In the coming weeks, as high schools have their proms the municipal police agency or State Police Troop in which the school is located will conduct underage drinking enforcement. Officers will conduct either roving DUI patrols or Cops In Shops stings. Dewey and Rehoboth Beach Police will be particularly busy, patrolling each prom night as the beach area is a popular after prom destination.

In conjunction with the enforcement, awareness efforts are being conducted on two fronts: paid media and school-based educational activities. Paid media efforts will include radio spots aimed at educating parents about the dangers and penalties of providing alcohol to minors, and ads on popular teen website, My Space. A click on the ad will take them to an information page which will give them the penalties for not only drinking and driving under Delaware's Zero Tolerance Law, but also of the penalties for underage possession and consumption of alcohol.

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

OHS is also reaching out to schools by sending a package of materials to either the YELL (Youth to Eliminate Loss of Life) Coordinator, SRO (School Resource Officer) or Wellness Center Director that can be used to promote an anti-impaired driving message from now through the end of the school year.

Parents looking for more resources to talk to their children about drinking and driving should visit the OHS website at www.ohs.delaware.gov and click on the link to Underage DUI Prevention. The web page includes a copy of OHS's underage drinking brochure, fliers, quizzes, and links to parent/teen contracts and other information from safety partners such as MADD.

Law enforcement agencies participating in the underage drinking campaign include the Camden Police, Clayton Police, Delaware State Police, Dewey Beach Police, Dover police, Elsmere Police, Felton Police, Harrington Police, Laurel Police, Milford Police, Newark Police, Rehoboth Police, Smyrna Police and Wyoming Police.

Last year in Delaware, four teens died in alcohol-related crashes, 68 teens ages 15 – 18 were injured and 466 minors were arrested for DUI. A second major underage drinking enforcement and awareness effort is planned for June during the peak graduation season.

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