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FMI: Jo Morrissey

Portland Youth Drinking Rates Also Decline

Portland Parent Survey Data Points to Clear Steps Taken

Portland, ME— Portland youth drinking habits have changed dramatically over recent years. According to the Maine Youth Drug and Alcohol Use Survey (MYDAUS), the percentage of Portland youth who report recent alcohol use (at least once within the past 30 days) has dropped significantly--from 37% in 2000 and 36% in 2004, to 29% in 2008. This mirrors the statewide trend announced yesterday by Maine's Office of Substance Abuse.

"Here in Portland, we believe the dramatic drop between 2004 and 2008 is the result of concerted efforts to reduce the acceptability and availability of alcohol to young people," says Jo Morrissey, Coordinator of 21 Reasons. According to Morrissey, law enforcement and other community-level efforts have played a large part. "Along with the decrease in teen drinking rates, we've also seen a big increase in the percentage of youth who say that alcohol is hard to get, especially among older teens."

21 Reasons has also measured changes in adult attitudes and behavior through a city-wide parent phone survey conducted in 2006 and 2008:

- Today's parents are more aware of the wide range of problems resulting from underage alcohol use—including concerns with brain development, addiction, and depression.
- Compared to just two years ago, 40% more parents agree with the statement, "As a parent, I feel that I have the ability to influence my teen's choices about alcohol."
- Fewer parents are willing to allow underage drinking in their home, and more parents are taking concrete steps to prevent their children from drinking. Steps include asking if alcohol will be present at a party, calling parents of a teen hosting a gathering, and talking with their teen about the dangers of alcohol.
- There was also an increase in parents counting and locking their alcohol—one of the most common sources of alcohol for younger teens.

Says Morrissey, "We expect youth drinking rates to continue to decline as parents and the broader community begin to realize that teen drinking is not inevitable and we can do something about it."

To learn more about what steps parents, as well as businesses, teachers, coaches, law enforcement and others in the community can do to reduce underage drinking, visit our web site: www.21Reasons.org or call 773-7737.

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