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News Release from Cameron Edgar April 27, 2009
President, Safe Community Coalition

Safe Community Coalition's *Project Safe Prom* addresses Serious Local and National Problem: Underage Drinking

The Safe Community Coalition (SCC) with the support of the Unified Prevention Coalition of Fairfax County Public School proudly announces *Project Safe Prom* which brings together area hotels, motels, restaurants, limousine companies, the public and private schools of Fairfax, Arlington, and Alexandria, and the police to promote safe prom nights for high school students. *Project Safe Prom*, formerly known as Project Hospitality, has been an initiative of the Safe Community Coalition for over a decade.

Leaders of county governments including law enforcement, businesses, and community organizations strongly support SCC's program of uniting our community in an effort to keep our teenagers' special night free from crashes and tragedy. In collaboration with the Fairfax Countywide Initiative to Reduce Underage Drinking and its *Parents Who Host, Lose the Most Campaign*, *Project Safe Prom* strongly advises parents to chaperone alcohol-free teen parties held in hotels and homes during prom season. By circulating the dates and places of the proms with information on current Virginia law related to underage drinking to area hotels, restaurants, limousine companies, and the Arlington and Fairfax County police, we are reminding the whole community of the importance of using common sense, following the law, and helping to ensure the safety for our youth on prom night.

To keep all teens safe, adults need to remember that the legal drinking age is 21 and understand the significant legal, health and safety consequences of underage drinking. The attached *Parents Who Host* fact card summarizes the Virginia underage drinking laws. Parents should actively chaperone teen parties in hotel rooms rented for post-prom parties. The adult signing for the room is legally liable should accidents or legal violations occur, such as underage drinking. Restaurants are reminded that they must check IDs. Limo drivers are not permitted to allow underage drinking in their vehicles and should call parents if a teen enters a limousine having consumed alcohol before, during or after the prom. Teens caught drinking and driving face serious penalties including the mandatory loss of a driver's license for one year.

Consider these statistics from the 2008 Fairfax County Youth Survey about underage drinking in our community:

- Almost two in four 12th grade students have used alcohol in the last 30 days (not just once)
- One in four 12th grade students reported binge drinking, drinking to get drunk (5 or more drinks for men and 4 or more drinks for women over a two hour period)
- 33.9% have ridden in a car driven by someone who's been drinking
- 11.4% of those 16 and older have driven a car after drinking

Jim Wordsworth, the Virginia Director Emeritus of the National Restaurant Association and Chairman of the Small Business Council of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, expressed his enthusiasm for *Project Safe Prom*, commenting, "This program has two measurable goals – the immediacy of further reducing the incidents of underage drinking and bringing the Hospitality Industry, local law enforcement and parents together on this life threatening issue with our young people."

Colonel David M. Rohrer, Fairfax County Chief of Police, has endorsed the initiative, stating, "During the 2009 Prom Season, the Fairfax County Police Department has reaffirmed our partnership with *Project Safe Prom*. It is through community partnerships like this one that we can have a positive effect on underage drinking and promote a safe and memorable prom experience."

For further information, contact Lynette Planto, SCC *Project Safe Prom* Chair at lplanto@cox.net

For information on "Parents Who Host, Lose the Most," contact Sara Freund, Chair of the Countywide Initiative to Reduce Underage Drinking at sarafreund@verizon.net or www.unifiedpreventioncoalition.org.

Note: the Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles Carrier Section will provide verification that the limousine companies available for prom night hire have proper operating authority in the state (call toll free: 1-866-878-2582).

2009 Prom Dates

SCHOOL	DATE	LOCATION
Annandale	May 29	Waterford Springfield
Centreville	May 29	Waterford Fair Oaks
Chantilly	May 16	Hyatt Reston Town Center
Edison	June 6	National Building Museum
Fairfax	June 6	Fox Chase Manor – Manassas
Flint Hill	June 9	Key Bridge Marriott
H-B Woodlawn	TBD	
Hayfield	May 15	Waterford Springfield
Herndon	June 6	Westfields Marriott
Jefferson	June 5	Westwood Country Club
Lake Braddock	June 12	Hyatt Reston Town Center
Langley	May 30	Hyatt Reston Town Center
Lee	May 22	Waterford Springfield
Madeira	May 16	Jammin' Java
Madison	May 30	Waterford Fair Oaks
Marshall	June 6	Tyson's Westin
McLean	May 30	Westwood Country Club
Mt. Vernon	June 6	Hyatt Crystal City
Oakton	May 29	McLean Hilton
Potomac School	June 6	Washington Club
Robinson	June 12	Tyson's Sheraton
South County	June 12	Waterford Springfield
South Lakes	May 8	Waterford Fair Oaks
Stone Bridge	May 30	National Conference Center
Stuart	May 9	Clarendon Ballroom
T.C. Williams	June 13	Crystal Gateway Marriott
Wakefield	June 5	Hilton Mark Center, Alexandria
Washington and Lee	June 13	Clarendon Ballroom
Westfield	May 29	Westfields Marriott
West Potomac	May 30	Sheraton National Crystal City
West Springfield	June 5	Key Bridge Marriott
Woodson	June 5	Waterford Springfield
Yorktown	May 29	Key Bridge Marriott