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IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Underage Alcohol Needs To Be Addressed By Parents, Community

SPRINGBORO, Ohio – It was a rough February. The weather forced us to reprioritize what our plans were so that we could cope with the issues that arise when snow and ice occur. Schools are closed or delayed, snow removal, making certain parking lots and sidewalks were salted for safety reasons, and the list goes on and on.

With April just around the corner, I am hopeful the weather situations are now behind us. This weekend, we are supposed to have our first sunny, near-80 day, and like most of you, I am looking forward to wearing short sleeves and working in the yard.

Something else happens this time of year, and it is a serious problem that I need the entire community's help with. When warm temperatures hit, our junior high and high school students are happy to be rid of winter coats and staying inside. They want to get outside, relax in the warm sunlight – and attend spring parties and events. These parties can provide the temptation to sample alcoholic beverages. Your child needs to know how to deal with this temptation when it comes; and it will.

The U.S. Surgeon General's Office recently made its first *Call To Action* against underage drinking. This is equivalent to the nation's Terror Alert system. Consider the entire nation on "elevated" in the area of teen drinking.

I have some good news and some bad news. The good news is parents, teachers and others who work with children have done a good job educating them about the dangers of smoking and illegal drug use. The Surgeon General reports that fewer teen-agers are smoking and using drugs than in years past.

Unfortunately, some students are turning to what may be the "drug" of choice readily available at home – alcohol. "Too many Americans consider underage drinking a rite of passage to adulthood," said Dr. Kenneth Moritsugu, the U.S. Surgeon General. "Research shows that young people who start drinking before the age of 15 are five times more likely to have alcohol-related problems later in life. New research also indicates that alcohol may harm the developing adolescent brain. The availability of this research provides more reasons than ever before for parents and other adults to protect the health and safety of our nation's children."

According to the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, it is estimated there are 11 million underage drinkers in the United States. Nearly 7.2 million are considered

binge drinkers, typically meaning they drank more than five drinks on occasion, and more than two million are classified as heavy drinkers.

Teaching your child how to say NO to the temptation to experiment with or use alcohol is just as important as telling them about drugs. Every spring we see on our television sets the results of horrifying accidents as a result of one of the drivers being under the influence. Let's not let that happen in Springboro.

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