



May 7, 2007

**Fairfax County Public Schools**

Fairfax County School Board

Safe and Drug- Free Youth Section

School-Community Coalitions:

- Annandale
- Centreville
- Chantilly
- Fairfax
- Falls Church
- Greater Herndon
- Lake Braddock
- Marshall-Tyson
- Oakton
- Reston
- Robinson
- Safe Community Coalition
- Safe Youth Coalition
- South County Youth Network
- Stuart
- Vienna-Madison
- West Springfield
- Westfield
- Woodson

Student Activities and Athletic Programs

**Fairfax County Government**

Fairfax County Board of Supervisors

Department of Community and Recreation Services

Fairfax County Police Department

Fairfax-Falls Church Community Services Board

Department of Systems Management for Human Services

Faith Communities In Action

Dear Parents:

A new countywide initiative to reduce underage drinking is being launched with support from school officials, county government leaders, local law enforcement officials and school-community coalitions. Alcohol is the single most used drug by young people. Underage drinking places a young person at risk for significant health, safety, and legal problems. A key element of the initiative to fight this epidemic is emphasizing the legal consequences of underage drinking: it is illegal for a person under 21 to consume or possess alcohol, and it is illegal for adults to provide them alcohol.

Our young people report that access to alcohol through family and friends is easy. Parents and adults in our community can help change this culture by not providing or allowing use of alcohol by young people and their friends. Parents must give teens the clear message that there is no safe way at their age to drink alcohol.

Consider these facts from the 2005 Fairfax County Youth Survey:

- One in two high school seniors reported they had consumed alcohol in the last 30 days.
- One in four of our seniors reported binge drinking in the past two weeks, meaning that they consumed alcohol in large amounts over a short period of time (five or more drinks in a row for a male; four or more in a row for a female).
- 27% of our high school students had ridden in a car driven by someone who had been drinking.
- 20% of students age 16 and older reported they had driven a car after drinking alcohol.

Fairfax County Police Department 2005 data for juveniles (under age 18) indicated 282 arrests for liquor law violations including Drunk in Public, DWI and DUI related offenses, escalating to 797 comparable arrests for those 18 to under 21 years of age. The increase in violations from senior year of high school upward is troubling. There were 3,149 reportable crashes for young drivers (16 to 21 years of age), and alcohol consumed by 122 of these drivers prior to the crashes resulted in 55 injuries and five deaths. These crashes and fatalities have become a major concern for the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and School Board.

Other risky behaviors associated with underage drinking in our county include:

- Alcohol poisoning and death,
- Risky sexual activity including date rape,
- Alcohol dependence,
- Adverse impacts on the still-developing adolescent brain, and
- Increased risk of depression and stress, contributing to suicide.

## Community

City of Fairfax Police  
Department

County Council of PTAs

Fairfax Partnership for Youth

Inova  
HealthSource

Northern Virginia Mothers  
Against Drunk Driving  
(MADD)

Town of Herndon Police  
Department

Town of Vienna Police  
Department

Major components of this phase of the new countywide initiative to reduce underage drinking include:

- ***Parents Who Host, Lose the Most: Don't Be a Party to Teenage Drinking*** a public awareness and education campaign directed at adults. The fact card enclosed summarizes the Virginia underage drinking laws and provides tips for providing a safe, alcohol-free environment for young people.
- ***Project Hospitality***, implemented by the Safe Community Coalition in McLean/Great Falls for the entire region each spring, promotes alcohol-free post-prom parties. Area hotels, motels, restaurants, and police work together with the public and private schools of Fairfax, Arlington, and Alexandria to reduce underage drinking and alcohol-related car accidents on prom nights. Unchaperoned post-prom parties in hotels are discouraged, and the legal consequences for parents if they permit underage drinking are stressed. See [www.safecommunitycoalition.com](http://www.safecommunitycoalition.com) for more information.
- Expansion of the Fairfax County Police Department's "***shoulder-tapping operation***" where police cadets under the age of 21 in plain clothes ask adults to purchase alcoholic beverages; those adults who purchase alcoholic beverages are then prosecuted under the law. In addition, residents, including students, who have information about underage drinking parties in homes should contact the police by calling the non-emergency number at 703-691-2131, TTY 711.
- Increased use of high school ***parent pledges*** in which parents sign an agreement to chaperone parties in their homes and not knowingly allow alcohol consumption by underage youth. Parents are then encouraged to call one another before their child attends social events in other homes.

This campaign was initiated by the leaders of some of our Fairfax County Public Schools' school-community coalitions and its Safe and Drug Free Youth Office in the belief that we all must join together to make a difference.

Join us in the campaign to provide a healthy, alcohol-free environment for the young people in Fairfax County. To view the parent pledge, translations of the fact card and this cover letter, and links to the national *Parents Who Host, Lose the Most* campaign see [www.fcps.edu/ss/SDFY/underage-drinking](http://www.fcps.edu/ss/SDFY/underage-drinking). For more information, contact Diane Eckert or Sara Freund, Co-Chairs, Countywide Initiative to Reduce Underage Drinking, at 571-423-4270, TTY 711.

**Gerald E. Connolly**  
Chairman  
Fairfax County Board  
Of Supervisors

**Daniel G. Storck**  
Chairman  
Fairfax County  
School Board

**Colonel David M. Rohrer**  
Chief of Police  
Fairfax County  
Police Department