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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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REALITY CHECK URGES PARENTS TO TAKE A STAND AGAINST UNDERAGE DRINKING Signing on-line pledge gives clear “no use” message

YPSILANTI, Mich., April 28, 2008—Reality Check, an anti-drug and alcohol campaign targeted at sixth, seventh and eighth grade students in seven Washtenaw and Livingston county schools, has a new on-line pledge for parents who wish to establish clear boundaries against underage drinking. The pledge is available on the www.myrealitycheck.org website by clicking on “adults.”

“Parents are critical in preventing youth drinking,” says Sharon P. Sheldon, Program Administrator of Health Promotion/Disease Prevention at Washtenaw County Public Health. “Teens whose parents are involved in their lives are less likely to use alcohol, and therefore less likely to suffer the sometimes tragic consequences of underage drinking.” Alcohol is a factor in the four leading causes of death among persons ages 10 to 24: motor-vehicle crashes, unintentional injuries, homicide, and suicide.

Delaying alcohol use is an important prevention strategy. Young people who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at age 21.

By signing the pledge, parents agree to:

- Never provide alcohol to youth or tolerate underage use.
- Be a positive role model for youth.
- Listen to and talk with their teen.
- Know their legal risks related to underage drinking.
- Support strict and consistent enforcement.
- Give clear no use messages about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.
- Never drive impaired.

Another benefit to signing the pledge during the early middle school years is that parents will have a few years to get to know one another before their children enter high school. This will strengthen their peer network as their teen matures and faces tougher issues such as weekend parties and spring break trips.

A partnership between the Washtenaw County Public Health Department and the Livingston County Community Alliance—Reality Check (www.myrealitycheck.org) was designed to combat and reduce favorable attitudes among youth towards alcohol, tobacco and other drugs, as well as change community norms regarding substance abuse.

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