

Parents LEAD – Listen Educate And Discuss Alcohol with your kids

January 9, 2006 – It is no secret that North Dakota is ranked number one in the nation for underage binge drinking – a disappointing achievement our state has actually held for a number of years. In North Dakota, nearly one-half of our teens report drinking alcohol in the past month and one-third report drinking heavily during the past month. In addition, over one third report riding with a drinking driver during the past month. Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for ages 4 to 34.

Simply put, we are losing some of the brightest and best to underage drinking. Their actions are contributing to the increasing number of serious injury and death on North Dakota roadways. Young people take risks and test limits. The transition from a family-centered world to a much larger community, where kids begin to define their own identity, can be difficult.

That is why today, more than ever, parents must play a proactive role in preventing underage drinking. *Parents are the single most important influence on a child. Parents need to talk to their kids. They will listen.*

That is the premise of the newly-developed Parents LEAD – Listen Educate And Discuss Alcohol Program, an initiative sponsored by the North Dakota Department of Transportation, Office of Traffic Safety. The program officially kicked-off in September with statewide media. LEAD is poised to become a resource for parents and kids alike to initiate discussion regarding over consumption and alcohol poisoning – what it is, warning signs, action steps, common misperceptions and consequences. Parents and kids can find information online at www.parentslead.org. The information is also being distributed to junior and high schools statewide at parent/teacher conferences.

When it comes to kids, parents make the difference. “We encourage all North Dakota Parents to LEAD – Listen Educate And Discuss with your kids the dangers and consequences of underage drinking, warning signs and proper reactions to over consumption/alcohol poisoning,” said Sandy Wilson, NDDOT, OTS Program Manager. *“They will listen.”*