

NEWS RELEASE

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Statewide Effort Targeting Minors Keeps Alcohol “Out of Their Hands”

COLUMBIA, S.C. – For the eighth year, an “enforcement and education blitz” coordinated by the S.C. Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS) has helped focus attention on the dangers of underage alcohol use.

Through the statewide campaign, South Carolina’s Alcohol Enforcement Teams (AETs) and prevention professionals collaborate on activities aimed at limiting access to alcohol by young people under the age of 21. The increased enforcement and public education efforts promote a safe end to the school year and a safe prom season. The campaign – called “Out of Their Hands” – emphasizes that it is against the law for anyone under 21 to purchase, possess, or consume alcoholic beverages.

“Alcohol use by young people, a critical problem for our state, is a major cause of loss of life for people under 21,” said Governor Henry McMaster when proclaiming April as Alcohol Awareness Month, “and alcohol-related car crashes are the leading cause of those deaths.”

The campaign, which ran April 1-30, resulted in:

- 13 party-dispersal operations;
- 175 traffic stops;
- 528 casual contacts;
- 660 compliance checks;
- 149 on-premise bar checks; and
- 25 public safety checkpoints.

The various operations led to 301 cases of charges being filed.

In addition to the law enforcement activities, 88 media activities were held at high schools and middle schools, colleges, public forums, community events, civic groups, beach rentals, lodging establishments, retail alcohol outlets, and other retail locations. These activities included presentations, articles, merchant education trainings, interviews, news conferences, news releases, advertisements, distribution of “Out of Their Hands” educational material, media focus on enforcement activities, social media impressions, campaign websites, and “Alcohol Walk/Run” awareness events. An estimated one million South Carolinians received information about underage drinking through these media activities. Throughout the year, DAODAS and the state’s 32 county alcohol and drug abuse authorities provide tools and support for the three tactics proven effective in the prevention of underage drinking: 1) reducing the availability of alcohol; 2) changing norms and behaviors through education; and 3) consistent enforcement of existing laws and regulations.

“Through our partnerships with law enforcement, we’re working to save the lives of young people across the state,” said Michelle Nienhius, Manager of Prevention Services for DAODAS, during a news conference held today at Brookland-Cayce High School (BCHS) in Cayce.

Joining Nienhius for the news conference were Sara Goldsby, Acting Director of DAODAS; Steven Burritt, State Director of MADD SC; students from the BCHS “Rise Above It” organization; and prevention professionals and law enforcement representatives from around the state.

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