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Drug-Free Action Alliance Participates in National Alcohol Awareness Month

Older Adults are Under-Diagnosed for Alcohol Abuse

(Columbus, Ohio) April is Alcohol Awareness Month and Drug-Free Action Alliance is stressing the importance of understanding the disease of alcoholism and the harmful health risks associated with problem drinking.

The misuse of alcohol affects every demographical and cultural sector of our society. Often times, one of the most overlooked categories of individuals are older and elderly adults. As many as 1 in 6 Americans, age 60 and older, are dependent on alcohol. The Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) characterizes this substance abuse as “under-estimated, under-identified, under-diagnosed and under-treated.”

“Research suggests that alcohol problems in older adults may soon become a major national health issue,” said Patricia Harmon, Executive Director of Drug-Free Action Alliance. “This is a complex problem that receives little attention and is too often missed by family members, health care and other providers.”

Late onset of alcoholism or alcohol abuse is frequently triggered by major physical or lifestyle changes of older adults, such as health problems, death of a spouse or financial worries. These changes often place older adults at risk for alcohol related problems. According to the American Geriatrics Society, older adults have higher blood alcohol levels per amount consumed than do younger adults, in part, because older adults metabolize alcohol at a decreased rate, causing alcohol to exacerbate certain health conditions and may compromise particular prescription medications being taken. An estimated 90% of older adults use prescription medications and as many as 100 may interact adversely with alcohol.

Screening to determine the risks associated with alcohol use is extremely important for this age group. Alcohol can be a factor in common health issues including falls, appetite and memory problems, trouble sleeping and depression. Individuals and their caretakers are encouraged to discuss levels of alcohol consumption with health care providers or use a free online screening tool at www.alcoholscreening.org. SAMHSA provides an online treatment locator at www.findtreatment.samhsa.gov for those seeking help.

Drug-Free Action Alliance is a statewide non-profit organization providing leadership to promote safe and drug free communities by bringing together individuals, groups and resources to prevent the abuse alcohol and the use of other drugs. More information can be obtained from the Ohio Resource Network Clearinghouse located at www.DrugFreeActionAlliance.org.

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Red Ribbon Celebration

College Initiative to Reduce
High Risk Drinking

Ohio Resource Network
Clearinghouse

Statewide Prevention
Coalition Association

Parents Who Host, Lose The Most:
Don't be a party to teenage drinking

Ohio Center for
Coalition Excellence

Know!

Youth Philanthropy
Council

www.DrugFreeActionAlliance.org