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PRESS RELEASE

**YOUTH AND RETAIL MERCHANTS LAUNCH LOCAL
CAMPAIGNS TO CURB ALCOHOL MARKETING TO YOUTH**

AUGUSTA, ME – Local retail stores that sell alcohol products can and should do more to shield children and youth from alcohol advertising. This is the conclusion of a representative group of retailers and members of the Youth Empowerment and Policy Group. Working together the groups have developed the **Maine Alcohol Retailer's Local Marketing Code of Conduct**.

In 2005 the Maine Youth Empowerment and Policy Group, a statewide youth advocacy group consisting of high school and college students, conducted a research survey to determine the impact of alcohol advertising on underage drinking. Over 500 Maine youth were included in the study. The results of this study were striking.

- Young people are exposed to a tremendous amount of alcohol advertising through television, press, radio and local marketing including alcohol industry merchandising and sponsorship at the local level.
- Many alcohol-marketing techniques seem to focus on themes that are particularly appealing to underage individuals.
- Two thirds of Maine youth surveyed believe that alcohol marketing encourages underage individuals to drink.

In February 2006 the Maine Youth Empowerment and Policy Group met with a representative group of concerned Maine retailers. These retailers are already taking responsibility to curb first and second hand sales of alcohol to minors. Now, working with the Maine Youth Empowerment and Policy Group some of these retailers have committed to address the issue of point of sale marketing. This partnership has created an alcohol marketing code of conduct.

Alcohol Retailer's Local Marketing Code of Conduct:

1. It is the responsibility of every retail manager to be aware of how alcohol marketing in their stores may affect underage individuals and to minimize the impact of alcohol advertising on youth to the best of their ability.
2. To the greatest extent possible, given store size and other limitations, placement of alcohol products and displays should be in areas less frequented

- by children. An effort should be made to keep alcohol products and displays away from areas that display candy and toys.
3. Alcohol signage should be placed above children's eye level and should not be located in areas frequented by children, i.e. Store entrances, checkout areas, candy, and toy areas
 4. Displays featuring sports figures, blow-up items, and appeals to sex symbols should be minimized. As the retailers stated "price should sell the product".
 5. Outside signage should comply with state law.
 6. Local retailers need to regularly and consistently ask their distributors and vendors to comply with this code and provide materials that comply with this code.

The youth and merchants supporting this initiative are asking local youth groups, community prevention coalitions and local business groups to work together to change marketing practices in their communities. Merchants that can demonstrate that they have made good faith efforts to reduce marketing that targets youth and have made physical changes within their store to better comply with the code will be awarded a sign designating them as a "Youth and Family Friendly Store". These signs **Our Town/Our Children** will be available for local participating youth or prevention groups to award.

The Youth Empowerment and Policy Group sees the Code as a tool that local communities can use to provide a healthier and safer environment for children. The initiative and work needs to be done at the local community level.

The Youth Empowerment and Policy Group will be working with the Maine Office of Substance Abuse and youth groups across the state to encourage local prevention groups to use the code to improve marketing practice in their communities. The retailers represented here may also make the Code available to their associated stores. The goal is to award 200 plaques over the next twelve months.