

PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SUBSTANCE ABUSE COALITION INCREASES STAFF TO ADDRESS UNDERAGE DRINKING

“Partnership with Sarasota School District AIMS to reduce alcohol use among teens”

The Sarasota County School District recently received a 3-year grant from the United States Department of Education to address underage drinking in Sarasota County. As part of the grant, the school district has formed a partnership with the Sarasota Coalition on Substance Abuse, to deliver training to local bar and restaurant staff on recognizing impaired patrons and false identification. In addition, the coalition will work closely with the Sarasota County Sheriff’s Office in the monitoring of the underage alcohol sale stings.

The total SMART (Sarasota Mobilizes Alcohol Reduction for Teens) Grant was awarded to the district for a total of \$1,050,000.00 for the three years, with approximately \$560,000 earmarked for projects the coalition will focus on in Sarasota County, including the Project Aim (Alcohol Impairment Measure).

“With local funding being reduced, this grant provides us an opportunity to make a positive impact in an area that has seen increase alcohol use among teens”, stated Curt Lavarello, Executive Director for Sarasota’s Substance Abuse Coalition and the moderator for the forums.

As part of the grant, the coalition recently hired two new Community Outreach Prevention Coordinators and a fulltime Administrative Assistant at its Sawyer Road Office. For the past year, the coalition has been surveying underage drinking statistics under the statewide SARG grant provided by Florida State University.

For more information, call Curt at 941-922-7233

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