

News Release

For Immediate Release

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Alta Vista Elementary School Fifth Graders Get Sobering Lesson in Alcohol Use

Sarasota, FL April 29 & 30, 2009

Fifth graders at Alta Vista Elementary School in Sarasota, FL learned about the dangers of underage alcohol use when Hilary Woodcum, Outreach Prevention Coordinator for the Sarasota Coalition on Substance Abuse visited their school to participate in a *Reach Out Now* Teach-In. The *Reach Out Now* National Teach-In is a nationwide program sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) within the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, to help prevent underage drinking.

“Most fifth graders in our community are not using alcohol, but it is a decision many face,” said Curt Lavarello, SCoSA’s Executive Director “In the United States, more than 10 million youth aged 12 to 20 are underage drinkers. Far too many children are beginning to drink at a dangerously early age. This *Reach Out Now* Teach-In is an important step in helping our kids get a clear and consistent message at home and at school that underage drinking is dangerous, illegal, and unacceptable.”

The Sarasota Coalition on Substance Abuse has been very involved this April in the promotion of Alcohol Awareness Month through their participation with the “We Don’t Serve Teens” national campaign and their local Responsible Vendor Training Program (Project AIM) which is a free community service to businesses in Sarasota County that sell or serve alcohol.

SAMHSA reports that families exert a great deal of influence on whether a child uses alcohol. What parents may not realize is that children say their parents’ disapproval of underage drinking is the key reason they have chosen not to drink. SAMHSA also reports that children and teens are less likely to abuse alcohol if parents are involved in their children’s lives, make and enforce clear rules, and are positive role models.

The Sarasota Coalition on Substance Abuse, in collaboration with SAMHSA, led the Teach-In.

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