



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Maria Alvarado – malvarado@txsdy.org | (917) 513.4862

Facing nearly 200 Total DUI arrests already in 2021, Dallas County Community Leaders Meet to Address the Issue and Ways to Protect Youth

Dallas ranked as state's third highest in DUI crashes, thousands of lives at risk each year

(Dallas, TX | January 27, 2021) – Statewide advocacy group Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth (TxSDY) hosted a wide-reaching regional forum designed to address the issue of underage drinking and impaired driving. Partnering with local leadership, parents and youth, TxSDY's forum hosted dozens of local leaders and residents committed to tackling the issue with targeted approaches specific to the Dallas community. Regional Partners co-hosting the event were Dallas Area Drug Prevention Partnership (DADPP), Recovery Resource Council, Drug Prevention Resources and IMPACT Communities. Dr. Elba Garcia, Dallas County Commissioner for Precinct 4, and Emma Dugas, Program Specialist from Mothers Against Drunk Driving, were featured keynote speakers.

“The local community plays a critical role in working to address substance use and impaired driving issues. From parents to educators to law enforcement, we all want to do everything possible to keep our kids safe,” said **Nicole Holt, CEO of Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth**. “Today’s forum will help provide Dallas families and leaders with resources and tools they can use to create safer communities. Through engagement, collaboration and open, honest discussion I know we can successfully turn the dial toward preventing youth substance use and reducing alcohol-related injuries and deaths.”

More than 200 Dallas County DUI and public intoxication arrests have occurred in past month and 194 in 2021 alone so far. Last year, more than 4,500 arrests occurred. Statewide, Texas saw nearly 25,000 DUI crashes in 2019, with Dallas County ranked with the third highest number of incidents. Underage drivers under the influence were involved in more than 1,600 crashes statewide in 2019 and there were 85 underage deaths from a DUI crash statewide that same year.

“The realities of underage drinking and intoxicated driving affect our local community in devastating ways. But in facing this issue, we also know that working together, we can defeat it, said **Dr. Garcia**. “We can stop underage drinking, lessen the toll it has on our community and prevent more unnecessary deaths from occurring. This is not simply a national problem or something you just hear about on the news. It is right here, in our local communities, and we all have the power to do something about it. Our

hope is that today's event inspires us all to continue to work together for our families, our neighbors and our youth."

"Far too many lives are impacted by drunk driving," said **Emma Dugas**. "Clearly, here in Dallas County the numbers bear out that tragic reality. And it's up to us to do something about it. I'm confident that collaborative efforts like today will translate to increased awareness, improved policies and lives saved, and I thank everyone who is a part of this effort"

Facing this data, the forum stressed the urgent need for action. Participants worked to collaboratively address:

- Trends in youth substance misuse
- Key prevention strategies
- Local community needs
- Collaborative approaches to create community change
- Successful steps for community engagement and mobilization

The Dallas event is part of a series of forums TxSDY is hosting across the state. The events seek to facilitate introductions between stakeholders in the community, increase collaboration and engagement and mobilize participants to reduce underage drinking and impaired driving in a coordinated and strategic way.

About Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth

Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth is the state's leading organization working to end underage alcohol, tobacco, and other drug use. Founded in 1997, with funding from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation administered by the American Medical Association, the statewide coalition builds on the strengths and successes of its longtime identity, Texans Standing Tall, while bringing new focus and energy to its mission of creating healthier and safer communities. More information can be found at <http://txsdy.org>.

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