



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Texas Youth Organize to Address Underage Drinking, Develop Strategies for Reducing Alcohol-Related Injuries and Deaths

Lubbock Health Department and local advocates join in effort to raise awareness and develop youth leadership in reducing underage drinking

(Lubbock, TX | February 28, 2022) – Today, youth leaders from across the state convened at a daylong event to develop strategies for addressing underage drinking and its consequences. The event, “Zero Alcohol for Youth Academy,” included the participation of youth from Lubbock and the surrounding area, and was uniquely designed to empower youth and adults alike in taking action within their local communities. The event was hosted by Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth, the state’s leading advocacy coalition working to reduce youth alcohol, drug and substance use, and included participation from Lubbock Department of Health’s Prevention Resource Center, and local advocates from HEARD (Helping Every Adolescent Reach Their Dreams).

Multiple sessions throughout the day provided youth with the information and resources for developing targeted solutions for their home communities. Youth were presented with information on trends in youth alcohol use, data findings on underage drinking, key prevention strategies, and ways of mobilizing local engagement and action.

“The youth who came to today’s Academy are true leaders who will impact real change,” said **Alicia Rosas, Youth Engagement Specialist at Texans for Safe and Drug-Free Youth**. “The unfortunate reality is far too many youth – whether directly or through friends – are far too familiar with the dangers of underage drinking, especially when mixed with driving. Young leaders like these are standing up to say they want to put an end to underage drinking and its consequences, and help keep Texas roadways safer. The Academy provides them with the tools they need to make that happen.”

“It’s so important for youth to understand the consequences of underage alcohol consumption,” said **Meagan Miller, Behavioral Health Manager at the Lubbock Health Department**. “They deserve to fully understand the short-term and long-term effects of underage drinking and to know the steps they can take to decrease youth drinking and improve the lives of their friends and family.”

Studies show drinking at a young age can lead to lifelong damage in brain function, memory, and coordination, and makes it more likely youth will develop addiction or substance abuse problems later in life. In Texas, the average age youth have their first drink is 13 years old, and nearly one-third of 7-12th grade students reported using alcohol in the past month, according to the most recent data available from the Texas School Survey. Additionally, driving under the influence of alcohol is the cause of more than 1,000 deaths per year in the state. With nearly 40 percent of all traffic fatalities in the state attributed to alcohol, Texas regularly ranks as the state with the highest number of alcohol-impaired driving fatalities in the country. Lubbock saw over 900 DUI crashes in 2020, of which 250 resulted in serious injuries or fatalities. In 2017, one quarter of all alcohol-related driver crashes in Texas involved a driver under age 25.

More information about TxSDY's youth-focused training can be found at <https://texansstanding.wpengine.com/youth-focused-training/> and more information about the Zero Alcohol for Youth Summits can be found at <https://txsdy.org/zero-alcohol-for-youth/>.

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.

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