

DHS teams up with the Ducks and Beavers to fight underage drinking

If you were listening to the Civil War game this past Saturday or the OSU-Stanford game the previous week, chances are you may have heard a familiar voice. Alcohol and Drug Policy Manager **Karen Wheeler** and **Jeff Ruscoe**, alcohol and drug prevention coordinator did radio interviews at both events to remind parents that underage drinking is not a game. It's against the law.

"I walked down on the field at half-time and did a live interview with the sidelines reporter," says Ruscoe who attended the OSU-Stanford game. "The cool thing is that our message was being broadcast live on about 22 radio stations reaching about 250,000 people."

The campaign is a unique partnership between DHS and the sports-marketing departments of both Oregon State University and the University of Oregon, and is federally funded by a grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

"The partnership focuses on reaching parents and adults with messages about preventing underage drinking and is very exciting to us," says Wheeler.

"It's a totally different way for DHS to get their message out," adds Ruscoe. "The universities



Campaign developed by Ohio Parents for Drug Free Youth

came to us and rolled out the carpet — 'here's what we can do for you. Are you interested in working with us?' It's wonderful."

For \$75,000 the Beavers and Ducks provide discounted radio air-time for live interviews, 10-second commercial lead-ins, and a 30-second PSA featuring Oregon's First Lady Mary Oberst. Plus, DHS will have full-page ads in every basketball game program and messages on the athletic departments' Web sites.

"An added bonus," says Ruscoe, "is both universities will feature the campaign at all women's basketball and softball games, too."

The timing couldn't be better. According to Oregon's annual Healthy Teens Survey, the drinking rates of Oregon eighth-grade girls increased by a third over the past four years; the 11th grade drinking rate has risen almost 15 percent; and most girls and boys are getting illegal alcohol from friends or parents — with or without their permission.

"That's why we're focusing on

parents," says Ruscoe. "The campaign is designed to educate them about what they can do to prevent underage drinking and what happens if they break the law." **For example:**

✓ *You can face a maximum sentence of 30 days in jail and a fine of \$1,000 for each offense.*

✓ *Others can sue you if you give alcohol to anyone under 21 and they, in turn, hurt someone, hurt themselves or damage property.*

✓ *Officers can take any alcohol, money or property used in committing the offense.*

Ruscoe says it's important for parents to stay in contact with kids away at college, too, and maintain a presence in their lives.

"The kids are at a point where they're starting to realize mom and dad know something. And parents can have more influence on their kids than anyone else."

Wheeler says they're looking forward to developing the partnership into the future and "reaching thousands of fans, adults and youth with the important message to prevent drinking and its consequences."

For more information about Oregon underage drinking go to: <http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/addiction/publications/underage-drink-fs.pdf>