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(Courtesy of Indiana Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Youth event highlights “Youth Access to Alcohol” survey results, celebrates Alcohol Awareness Month and Orange Ribbon Week

INDIANAPOLIS – Today, the Indiana Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking will release results of the “Youth Access to Alcohol” survey as part of an Alcohol Awareness Month celebration and the commencement of the 2003 Orange Ribbon Week Campaign designed to educate and build awareness about underage drinking issues. Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) will also take part in this event as part of their annual statewide conference. A press conference will take place at 1:30 p.m. on the steps of the RCA Dome (NE corner off of Capitol Avenue in Indianapolis).

The “Youth Access to Alcohol” survey, conducted by the Mathematica Policy Research Institute, Inc. and analyzed by the University of Minnesota Division of Epidemiology, assessed the knowledge of, attitudes towards, and level of public support for alcohol policies. Following are highlights from the survey:

- 89% of respondents are concerned about underage drinking.
- 55% of respondents agree that people who drink should pay higher taxes to reduce the problems associated with drinking.
- 81% of respondents favor an increase of 5 cents per drink on alcohol to pay for programs to prevent underage drinking.
- 72% of respondents favor an alcohol tax increase if funds generated by this tax were used to lower other taxes.
- 84% of respondents favor mandatory alcohol service training for all employees who sell alcohol.

These survey results support the Coalition’s backing for an increase in the state’s alcohol tax. Indiana’s alcohol tax has not been raised since 1981, resulting in a loss of revenue for the state, as well as increased health risks for all Hoosiers – including an increase in alcohol-related traffic crashes, violent crimes and cases of liver cirrhosis. Indiana’s alcohol taxes are lower than all the surrounding states, except Kentucky, and Indiana taxes are significantly lower than the national average. For example, Indiana’s tax on beer is 1.08 cents per drink compared to the national average of 5 cents per drink.

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The youth event also will highlight the “SADD Student of the Year” and the “Quick Click” challenge where teams of students will race against the clock to see how quickly they can get in and out of a car – making sure to buckle up. The event will commence with the youth signing a 20-foot banner to show their commitment to staying alcohol free, and the release of 500 orange balloons to kick-off Orange Ribbon Week. More than 200 students will be in attendance wearing orange T-shirts.

Since the Coalition’s inception in 1997, the percentage of monthly underage drinkers in Indiana has dropped from 35 percent to approximately 31 percent. The Coalition’s member individuals and organizations work diligently to build awareness throughout the state with legislators, media and the general public about the serious problem of underage drinking and the policies that are key to reducing youth access to alcohol.

The Indiana Coalition to Reduce Underage Drinking, a project of the Mental Health Association in Indiana, is one of 12 coalitions nationwide participating in the “Reducing Underage Drinking through Coalitions” funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, with national program support from the American Medical Association.

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