

## NEWS RELEASE

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### “Spring Blitz” Works to Keep Alcohol Out of the Hands of Youth Under 21

COLUMBIA, S.C. – South Carolina’s Eighth Annual “Out of Their Hands” Spring Blitz will begin April 1. **Strict enforcement coupled with a strong media message will run until April 30.** Coordinated by the S.C. Department of Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Services (DAODAS), the state’s Alcohol Enforcement Teams (AETs) and their enforcement and education partners will engage community residents, businesses, and others to deny alcohol access to youth who are under 21.

The “Out of Their Hands” campaign is designed to coincide with **Gov. Henry McMaster’s** proclamation of April 2017 as Alcohol Awareness Month in South Carolina. “(I) encourage all South Carolinians to support efforts that prevent alcohol abuse and underage drinking in our communities, particularly those that recognize and encourage youth who have made the decision to remain free of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs,” McMaster said in his proclamation.

With spring break and prom season in full swing, April is prime time for many teens to “let loose,” have fun, and forget about the worries of school. While enjoying these springtime festivities is a great way for teens to recharge their batteries, teens who choose to illegally drink alcohol need to beware. Local law enforcement will be out in full force during April to crack down on underage drinking – especially teens who drink and drive. Officers will conduct increased party patrols to stop underage drinking before it begins, and will step up other enforcement activities such as compliance checks and public safety checkpoints to deter underage drinking and driving. Staff from county alcohol and drug abuse authorities will lead presentations informing the public of the danger and illegality of providing alcohol to individuals under 21 years old.

“This stepped-up enforcement is not about arrests or tickets, but about saving lives,” said **Sara Goldsby, Acting Director of DAODAS.** “Although we have made progress in reducing death and serious injuries due to underage drinking in South Carolina, there is still more work for us to do.”

According to the S.C. Department of Public Safety, from 2007 to 2014 (the most recent data available), 3,694 drivers under 21 were involved in alcohol-related traffic crashes in South Carolina – an average of about 480 drivers a year. Preliminary traffic crash numbers for 2015 reveal that approximately 400 drivers under 21 were involved in alcohol-related traffic crashes.

“Out of Their Hands” extends throughout the entire month of April to cover South Carolina proms and spring breaks that typically occur from late March until early May, with a majority of events held in April. Each year, the spring prom blitz has been a great success because local AETs set their own schedules based on proms, spring breaks, and other end-of-year school activities.

AET enforcement and education strategies will be posted on the campaign website at [SCOutOfTheirHands.org](http://SCOutOfTheirHands.org), and information will be available on the [campaign’s Facebook page](#). The statewide effort involves 16 AETs that cover South Carolina’s 46 counties.

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*DAODAS is the cabinet agency charged with ensuring the provision of quality services to prevent or reduce the negative consequences of substance use and addictions.*

