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REPORT REVEALS NEED FOR INCREASED FOCUS ON REDUCING CHILDHOOD DRINKING IN AMERICA

Washington, D.C. (April 10, 2003) – Today's report by the Center for Alcohol Marketing and Youth (CAMY) underscores the need for all Americans to do more to reduce the problem of underage drinking. The *Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free* commends CAMY for continuing to focus national attention on this critical public health problem. Just as CAMY's *State Alcohol Advertising Laws* report provides a call-to-action for many states, the Leadership believes it offers a call-to-action to all adults who have a direct impact on children. Recent studies have shown that America's children are overexposed to alcohol advertising. It is one of many influences in a child's everyday life that affects behavior—from what they see and hear from adults at home, in school and in their communities, to what they see in the advertising media.

The *Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free* works in concert with organizations like CAMY, and is the first initiative of its kind to address the problem of childhood drinking in the age group when it often begins—among youth ages 9 to 15. A bipartisan group of more than 30 Governors' spouses, the *Leadership* seeks to educate the American public about the dangers of early alcohol use and to mobilize action to prevent it.

Working with policymakers, parents, law enforcement officials, healthcare professionals, media and opinion leaders to help the public understand that while childhood drinking is a complex problem, there are proven prevention strategies that provide guidance in reducing and preventing underage drinking. These include:

- Enforcing existing underage drinking laws
- Restricting access and availability of alcohol to children
- Limiting alcohol advertising enticing to children
- Supporting a national childhood alcohol use prevention campaign

Alcohol is the number one drug of choice among America's youth, making underage drinking a serious public health issue in our nation. According to a recent government study, 40 percent of ninth graders reported having consumed alcohol before they were 13, and 25 percent had been binge drinking in the prior month. Studies also show that the risk of developing serious alcohol problems is decreased by 70 percent if drinking is delayed until age 21.

For more information on the legislation concerning underage drinking visit the *Leadership Web* site at www.alcoholfreechildren.org.

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About the Leadership: The *Leadership to Keep Children Alcohol Free* is an initiative spearheaded by more than 30 Governors' spouses to prevent the use of alcohol by children ages 9 to 15. The initiative was founded in 2000 with support from the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and receives additional support from several other Federal agencies. It is advised by representatives from 28 public and private organizations with shared interests in children's well-being and is the only national coalition that focuses on the prevention of alcohol use in this young age group. Visit www.alcoholfreechildren.org.

To read the full CAMY report, visit the Web site at www.camy.org.