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TEENS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY HOLD RALLY IN WASHINGTON DC TO CALL ON THE BEER INSTITUTE TO HONOR ITS MARKETING CODE AND STOP TARGETING TEENS

WASHINGTON DC, June 27, 2003 - More than 10 million underage youth drink alcohol and of this group, nearly 7 million are binge drinkers. Alcohol sales to underage youth account for up to \$22 billion a year. According to the American Medical Association, underage drinking is reaching epidemic proportions. Underage drinkers account for up to 20 percent of total alcohol consumed in the United States. It is a major factor in nearly all leading causes of death for youth 5-25 years old. Alcohol consumption by adolescents may result in brain damage -- possibly permanent -- and impaired intellectual development.

More than 90 youth came to Washington DC today to highlight the problem of underage drinking and the targeting of teens by the alcohol industry, especially beer manufacturers. The teens held a rally in front of Beer Institute, a trade association whose members produce 90 percent of the beer brewed in America and manufacture malt-based, alcohol infused beverages that are extremely popular with underage youth. The youth are part of the Reducing Underage Drinking through Coalitions initiative, a partnership of the American Medical Association and The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. The rally was part of a three-day advocacy assembly for teens in leadership roles in local coalitions from Connecticut, Georgia, Indiana, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Texas and Washington DC.

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## TEENS HOLD RALLY AT BEER INSTITUTE

“The alcohol industry spends \$4 billion a year promoting their product with images that clearly focuses on encouraging teens to enjoy a beer or hard lemonade,” says Jeremy Hosten, 18, of Liberty, Missouri. “The message is that if you drink our product you will be a popular person who loves to party.”

Beer Institute has its own advertising and marketing code that its members are supposed to follow but the code lacks any type of oversight or corporate responsibility. Recent studies from the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth clearly outlines the beer industry’s systematic targeting of underage youth. Underage youth saw 45 percent more beer ads in magazines than adults – the intended target. According to the author of a recent study on magazine alcohol advertising in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, “Self-regulation by the alcohol industry is not adequately preventing indirect targeting of adolescents through magazines.”

“The beer industry capitalizes on the images of sex and popularity in its advertising which they know is attractive to teens,” says Darlene Ortega, 16, from El Paso, Texas. “Beer Industry marketing code 4E assures us that all models and actors will appear to be over 21 years old. Number 7B says ads will not portray sexual passion or promiscuity. Ads for Coors, Miller and Bud Light do not follow the industry’s self-imposed code. The alcohol industry utilizes a powerful combination of advertising dollars and savvy marketing to recruit new, youthful drinkers in order to maintain its customer base.”

At the rally, teens wearing shirts emblazoned with bull’s eyes and “Don’t Target Me” held up signs with underage drinking statistics and slogans, calling on the Beer Institute to follow its own code. Speakers showed examples of egregious violations while reminding people of the need to hold the alcohol industry accountable for the rise in underage drinking.

“The teens assembled here today are asking Beer Institute President Jeff Becker to show some leadership and enforce its advertising and marketing code by removing all models and actors from its ads and just show the product,” says Jacqueline Hackett, 17, of Harleysville, Pennsylvania.

Following the rally, three teens representing the group entered Beer Institute offices to present a resolution signed by all the teen advocates.