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## **Town hall meeting presents new statistics on teen drinking**

DURANT, OK—With prom and graduation season just around the corner the Bryan County Turning Point Coalition used this weekend as an opportunity to present recent statistics on teen drinking.

A guest speaker provided new details on the affects of alcohol on teenagers, and explained that the risk of becoming addicted is heightened at the ages of 14 and 15. In the United States nearly 50 percent of teenagers have already tried alcohol by then.

The meeting provided details for parents, educators and concerned residents about the damage caused by alcohol on teenagers brains. It also provided a platform to discuss new ideas on reaching adolescents.

“Every community in the nation is experiencing the same problem where things that we have in place are just not working,” Becca Parr said. “It is time to take an aggressive approach so that we can try to overcome and try to steer our children in the right directions.”

The group used the event to present new statistics on how alcohol prohibits brain development but also to show off their new marketing campaign aimed at parents who allow their teenagers to drink.

“Parents want to be cool,” Delinda Knox said. “They want to be the house that everybody wants to go to. They think if they supply the alcohol that makes them the cool parent and they don’t realize that they’re damaging those kids brains and they’re breaking the law.”

Although it’s already a state law throughout Oklahoma, the city of Durant has also passed an ordinance to begin cracking down on parents who allow teen drinking.

Becca Parr works with the coalition but she’s also a parent, and her life has been directly affected by teen alcohol consumption.

“I think that kids believe they are invincible. I have a cousin that died at 14 because she drank alcohol at a college party with some older friends and did not wake up,” Parr said.

Delinda Knox helped organize the event and has one request for parents everywhere.

“Start talking before they start drinking. That’s the number one thing if I could get one message out to parents today it would be to take time, take ten minutes, sit down and have a conversation with your child.”

The Bryan County Turning Point Coalition, along with the Safe and Drug Free Schools Program, tries to hold a town hall meeting every other year stressing the importance of underage drinking awareness.

They’re in the process of launching a major media campaign using the phrase, “Parents Who Host-Lose the Most.” It urges parents to keep their underage children away from alcohol.