

Remarks of Glynn Birch, MADD National President

Good morning. Research shows that the earlier youth begin to drink, the more likely they are to suffer from alcohol-related problems later in life, including alcohol dependency and drunk driving. Yet, despite the dangers, underage drinking continues to plague our society.

MADD, in collaboration with State Farm, created the *Protecting You/Protecting Me* program, or as we like to call it PY/PM, to help address this problem and introduce youths to the dangers of alcohol at a young age. While most prevention programs focus on middle-school aged children, PY/PM targets kids **before** they are first confronted with alcohol.

State Farm helped us create the youth-led model of PY/PM which engages high school students enrolled in an upper level, elective leadership, mentoring, or service learning class for credit to deliver the curriculum to elementary school kids. The program exposes both the high school student teacher and the elementary school students to the prevention message.

And thankfully, this approach works. In an evaluation of the program, high school students were trained in PY/PM and delivered the curriculum to students in grades 1-5. A total of 327 elementary students in grades 3-5 were surveyed in school year 2002-2003. From pre-survey to post-survey, elementary students receiving PY/PM increased their vehicle safety skills 10 times and knowledge of brain development 11 times more than non-PY/PM students.

High school students were also found to be impacted by teaching PY/PM. When asked before teaching PY/PM about their alcohol use in the past 60 days and then again after teaching PY/PM about their alcohol use, high school students teaching PY/PM:

- Reduced use of liquor 8%; beer 6%; wine coolers 6%; wine 1%; and binge drinking 6%
- Increased perceptions regarding harmfulness of underage alcohol use
- Improved teaching skills

MADD is pleased at the success of PY/PM and truly thankful to State Farm for their continued support of the youth-led version of this program. Their partnership has helped keep alcohol out of the hands of our precious youths