April is Alcohol Awareness Month:

Alcohol Facts You'll Never Hear from Big Booze

- The alcoholic-beverage industry relies on heavy and addicted drinking for the largest share of its profits. Hazardous drinking (5 or more drinks at one sitting) accounts for more than half of the alcohol industry's \$155 billion market, and more than 75% of the beer industry's market.¹
- Underage alcohol use is more likely to kill young people than all illegal drugs combined.² More than 1,700 college students in the U.S. are killed each year—about 4.65 a day—as a result of alcohol-related injuries.³
- Underage drinking spawns the future heavy and addicted drinking on which the industry depends for most of its sales. People who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence at some time in their lives compared with those who have their first drink at age 20 or older.⁴
- Nearly 14 million Americans one in every 13 adults -- abuse alcohol or are alcoholic. Fewer than 25% of those who need treatment get it in a given year.
- Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD) are the leading preventable cause of birth defects in the U.S., affecting as many as 40,000 babies per year and costing upwards of \$5.4 billion per year.⁶
- Some 75 percent of husbands or wives who abuse their spouses have been drinking prior to or at the time of the abuse.
- Health risks of drinking include increased incidence of cancers of the liver, esophagus, throat, and larynx (voice box), as well as liver cirrhosis, immune system problems, brain damage, and heart problems.
- To avoid health risks associated with alcohol, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) advise those who drink to do so in moderation **defined as consuming no more than one drink per day for women and up to two drinks per day for men**.
- Alcohol is implicated in the deaths of some 85,000 Americans every year, making it the nation's third leading cause of preventable death after smoking and obesity.
- Drunk driving accounts for about 16,000 alcohol-related deaths per year, only about 25% of all alcohol-related deaths. One-quarter of all emergency room admissions, one-third of all suicides, and more than half of all homicides and incidents of domestic violence are alcohol-related.

- Alcohol-related problems cost the U.S. economy an estimated \$185 billion per year in lost productivity and earnings due to alcohol-related illness, premature death, and crime.
- Television ads for alcohol products outnumber "responsibility" messages by 32 to one. From 2001 to 2003 the industry spent \$2.5 billion on television product advertising, and only \$27 million on "responsibility" programs.⁷
- The number of distilled spirits ads on cable networks grew 5,687% between 2001 and 2004, from 645 to 37,328. Distilled spirits spending on cable network advertising grew 3,392%, from \$1.5 million to \$53.6 million in that period. The number of cable network alcohol ads that exceeded the industry's 30% underage audience threshold nearly doubled to 18,027 in 2004, up from 9,235 in 2001.
- The alcoholic-beverage industry so far contributed nearly \$4 million to federal candidates and parties in the 2006 election cycle alone. Contributions from the National Beer Wholesalers Association (NBWA) account for nearly 40% of this amount. In the 2005-2006 election cycle, the NBWA's political action committee (PAC) is the second largest of all PACs, next to the National Association of Realtors.
- More than half (260) of the U.S. House of Representatives members seeking reelection in the 2006 campaign cycle took contributions from the NBWA (nearly 20% of recipients took \$10,000 or more).

April, 2006

References:

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² Grunbaum, J.A.; Kann, L.; Kinchen, S.A.; et al. Youth risk behavior surveillance: United States, 2001. MMWR: Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report 51(SS0 4): 1–62, 2002. (6) Young, S.E.; Corley, R.P.; Stallings, M.C.; et al. Substance use, abuse and dependence in adolescence: Prevalence, symptom profiles and correlates. Drug and Alcohol Dependence 68(3):309–322, 2002.

³ Magnitude of Alcohol-Related Mortality and Morbidity Among U.S. College Students Ages 18-24: Changes from 1998 to 2001; Ralph Hingson, Timothy Heeren, Michael Winter, Henry Wechsler; Annual Review of Public Health, April 2005, Vol. 26: pp. 259-279.

⁴ Grant, B.F., and Dawson, D.A. Age of onset of alcohol use and its association with DSM–IV alcohol abuse and dependence: Results from the National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey. Journal of Substance Abuse 9:103–110, 1997.

⁵ National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), Strategic Plan 2001-2005.

⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) FASD Center for Excellence, 2003.

⁷ Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth. "Alcohol Industry Responsibility Advertising on Television, 2001 to 2003." (2005)

⁸ "Alcohol Advertising on Television, 2001-2004: The Move to Cable," Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth (December, 2005).

⁹ OpenSecrets.org (http://www.opensecrets.org/industries/contrib.asp?Ind=N02)