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Coalition for a Drug-Free Greater Cincinnati Celebrates 12th Anniversary and Community Success in Preventing Youth Alcohol and Substance Use with Annual Breakfast

CINCINNATI— On Friday, April 11, 2008, the Coalition for a Drug-Free Greater Cincinnati hosted its annual community event. This year the event was a breakfast, held at Xavier University's Schiff Conference and Banquet Center at the Cintas Center, and was attended by 170 members of the community. At the event, the Coalition celebrated its 12th anniversary and recognized community leaders and groups who have contributed to the Coalition's mission.

The 2008 Founders Award was given to Neil F. Tilow, President and CEO of Talbert House. This award is given in honor of the Coalition's founder, former Congressman Rob Portman, to a community partner whose vision and strategic leadership has made a significant contribution to the Coalition's overall mission of reducing adolescent substance abuse. Neil has supported the Coalition for a Drug-Free Cincinnati from its earliest days. He only recently retired from the Board of Trustees after a decade of service. In his tenure, he wisely guided the Coalition's continued growth, encouraging its progress and helped it plant stronger roots throughout the region. He continues to generously provide his expertise to the Coalition as a friend and colleague.

The 2008 Commitment to Community award was given to Linda Verst. This award goes to a volunteer whose passion and innovative leadership contribute significantly to advancing substance abuse prevention in their community. Linda has been a prevention professional for over 20 years and has served numerous organizations including the Coalition for a Drug-Free Greater Cincinnati, Champions for a Drug Free Northern Kentucky (now Kenton County Alliance), the Kentucky Certification Board of Prevention Professionals, the Kentucky Advocate at the International Certification and Reciprocity Consortium (IC&RC) and the Prevention Advocacy Group for Kentucky. Although now retired, she was an active member of the Reviving the Human Spirit Initiative, developed Student Assistance Programs, and worked diligently to advance the expertise and professionalism of the prevention field, among many other activities. She continues to volunteer her time to local efforts as much as possible.

The Coalition for a Drug-Free Greater Cincinnati has over 30 member community coalitions who work to prevent youth substance abuse in neighborhoods across the 10-county tri-state region. This year's Outstanding Coalition of the Year award was given to the Coalition for a Safe and Drug-Free Fairfield. Founded in 2003, and serving the city of Fairfield and Fairfield township in Butler County, Ohio, the Coalition for a Safe and Drug-Free Fairfield was formed to build and strengthen the capacity of all within the community to create as safe, healthy, and drug-free Fairfield. They have been successful in expanding community involvement and partnerships, consistently making data-based decisions and plans, and braiding the asset development framework within their strategies and activities, resulting in their increased capacity to address adolescent substance abuse.

The final award was given to Alexandria Wilson, the 2008 Youth Volunteer of the Year. This award is given to the student who has best modeled a drug-free lifestyle and motivated their peers to take an active role in substance abuse prevention. Alexandria has been a member of Student Congress, the youth task force at the Coalition, for three years and currently serves as President. She helped develop the current "3 out of 4" campaign, peer to peer campaign targeting underage drinking. Alexandria is currently a Junior at Walnut Hills High School.

2008 Annual Community Event and Awards

The Coalition's Annual Community Event is a fundraiser to generate operating support for the organization. The 2008 event was attended by over 170 members of the community, including community leaders, elected officials, law enforcement officers, volunteers and others. The emcee for the event was Dan Carroll from Fox 19. The invocation was given by Bishop Dwight Wilkins, and music was provided by two quartets from the Starling Project Foundation, Inc.

The Coalition for a Drug-Free Greater Cincinnati wishes to thank everyone who made the event a tremendous success, including sponsors, award winners and staff. They especially wish to thank everyone who makes their work possible by committing to the vision that every youth will grow up in a purposely drug-free environment.

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The Coalition for a Drug-Free Greater Cincinnati (CDFGC), established in 1996 by former U.S. Congressman Rob Portman of Ohio, has become a model for community coalitions nationwide. The Coalition serves communities throughout the 10-county, tri-state region by promoting drug-free environments for youth by enhancing partnerships to educate, advocate and support locally-based community mobilization. This is accomplished through partnering with business leaders, parents, schools, youth, faith-based leaders, law enforcement, community groups, media and other partners in local communities to implement comprehensive, community-wide, anti-drug initiatives with a goal of reducing substance use and abuse through prevention education.

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