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THE GREATER NEW ORLEANS DRUG DEMAND REDUCTION COALITION ANNOUNCES THE RELEASE OF NEW ORLEANS DRUG CONTROL STRATEGY

NEW ORLEANS, LOUISIANA - The news headlines are shocking ...a local mother addicted to drugs deserts her child; an innocent child is shot-caught in the crossfire of drug related gunfire while walking home from school; 63% of Orleans Parish traffic deaths are alcohol related; drug and alcohol induced violence escalates among young adults. "The time is right, the time is now to address this serious problem, said Stephanie Haynes, Chairman of the Drug Demand Reduction Coalition's Strategic Planning Initiative, who urged citizens and community leaders to get involved in this important endeavor to end the drug problem that plaques New Orleans.

Haynes spearheaded an unprecedented collaboration by prevention, treatment and law enforcement officials to author the first ever New Orleans Drug Control Strategy, which is being unveiled to the public today. This strategy is aimed at preventing and reducing the drug problem in our community, by targeting the contributing factors and offering sound solutions that will lead to our ultimate goal: a safer and healthier New Orleans.

A team of more than hundred concerned citizens – including representatives from federal, state, and local government, as well as education, health care, and public and private industry – worked tirelessly over the past 8 months to produce this plan. The broad-based partnership, which Chairman Stephanie Haynes and U. S. Attorney Jim Letten call "unprecedented in its breadth" resulted in regular in-depth candid discussions and planning by diverse individuals and equally diverse entities across the economic, gender, ethnic, professional, and political spectrum.

Contained within the document is a Community Needs Assessment, funded by Metropolitan Human Service District, which for the first time provides base line data describing the extent and impact of the drug abuse problem in New Orleans. The following are some alarming findings from the report.

- 49% of homicide victims had been previously arrested for a drug offense.
- 49% of those charged with homicide had a prior arrest for a drug offense.
- Marijuana use by young adults was 13.0 percent in the New Orleans area; this is more than twice the rate for all adults.
- Almost half (47%) of all adults in the New Orleans area indicated that smoking marijuana once a month posed a great risk.
- 28.5% of adults engaged in binge alcohol use in the past month.
- Drunk driving arrests increased by almost 50% from 2009-2011.
- 63% of the New Orleans traffic deaths were alcohol related. (2010)
- Total cost of alcohol related accidents in Orleans Parish = 48.3 million. (2010)
- Alcohol or drugs were involved in 60% of physical violence by college students.
- One quarter (26%) of students reported performing poorly on a test or school project due to their alcohol or drug use.

- 6% of New Orleans High School students self reported that they themselves sold illegal drugs in the past year. (2010)
- 9,000 young adults in Orleans Parish have substance use disorders.
- 2,000 adolescents under age 18 are in need of services for a substance use disorder.
- 74% of drug overdose deaths are prescription pain related.

The Greater New Orleans Drug Demand Reduction Coalition supports a citizen driven strategic approach towards a safer and healthier, drug-free New Orleans. In the fall of 2012, the Coalition will begin to implement the New Orleans Drug Control Strategy and engage the citizens of New Orleans in helping to put the plan into action.

Speaking to today's release, United States Attorney Jim Letten, who partnered with Chairman Stephanie Haynes and the members of the coalition as convener and as a working representative – stated:

“Today's release of the New Orleans Drug Control Strategy by the Greater New Orleans Drug Demand Reduction Coalition is a beginning, and not the end of a process. Some seven months ago, this tremendous, committed coalition under Stephanie Haynes' and Seton Jenkins' visionary leadership, embarked on an exciting and ambitious plan to identify the causes and scope of the serious alcohol and drug abuse problem which helps to fuel street and domestic violence – and ultimately to actively address it. The commitments that I have seen from the people standing here today who comprise the membership of this coalition has been an inspiration to me and to others. Together, we will not relent or even rest until we have set in motion real, productive solutions to this complex and debilitating problem which threatens our society. Our goals are simple – to make Greater New Orleans a safer, healthier place for all of our citizens – especially our young who will inherit it.”

Jimmy S. Fox, III, Drug Enforcement Administration Special Agent in Charge of the New Orleans Field Division added:

“The proposed New Orleans Drug Control Strategy is an important living document that provides a written memorial to the commitment of the Drug Enforcement Administration's partnership with our various local, state and federal counterparts, as well as numerous non-profit community action organizations, aimed at making the greater New Orleans area are more productive and safer place to live and visit.”