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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 18, 2010

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AVOID BINGE DRINKING THIS SPRING BREAK

OKALOOSA COUNTY – At the height of spring break season - and one month following the release of the County Health Rankings - the Okaloosa County Health Department reminds residents and visitors to avoid binge drinking.

Okaloosa County was ranked 17th out of 67 in the state for health behaviors that impact our overall health. Binge drinking was one of measures that contributed to the 17th rating in the health behaviors category. In the study, Okaloosa had binge drinking rates of 16 percent among adults - double the targeted value.

“What many people don’t realize is that binge drinking is classified as the consumption of five or more drinks for women, or six or more drinks for men, on a single occasion within a 30 day period,” reminds Dr. Karen Chapman, Director at the Okaloosa County Health Department. “Spring break festivities often provide a great excuse for people to over-do it.”

So, what’s a drink? A standard drink is any drink that contains about 1.2 tablespoons of pure alcohol. That means that 12 oz of beer (or wine cooler), 8-9 oz of malt liquor, 5 oz of table wine, 3-4 oz of fortified wine, 2-3 oz of cordial, liqueur, or aperitif, 1.5 oz of brandy, and 1.5 oz of spirits are all approximately equivalent in alcohol content.

The Okaloosa County Health Department reminds everyone of these alcohol safety tips:

- **If you drink, DON’T DRIVE.** Always designate a sober driver.
- Know the signs of alcohol poisoning. This is a severe and potentially fatal physical reaction to an alcohol overdose, and it is the most serious consequence of binge drinking. Signs of alcohol poisoning include: loss of consciousness, vomiting, cold/clammy/pale/bluish skin, and slow/irregular breathing. **If you see any of these signs, call 911 immediately.**
- Don’t drink on an empty stomach.
- Set a limit and stick to it.
- Avoid beer bongs, chugging, and drinking games.
- Know when you’ve had enough.
- Alternate alcoholic drinks with water, and be sure to drink plenty of water to stay hydrated.
- Never drink when you’re hungry, angry, lonely, or tired.
- Pace yourself. It takes the body 60-90 minutes to fully feel the effects of alcohol on a full stomach.
- Never leave your drinks unattended or accept an open beverage from anyone.

To learn more about the County Health Rankings, visit www.countyhealthrankings.org. For more information and for help with binge drinking habits, visit www.okaloosaantidrug.org, or call Bridgeway Center at (850) 244-9191.

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