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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **ALARMING RISE IN PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE**

Prescription drug abuse is on rise among teens and young adults. The Partnership for a Drug-Free America reports that 19% of U.S. teens – roughly 4.5 million youths – reported haven taken prescription painkillers such as Vicodin or OxyContin or stimulants such as Ritalin or Adderall to get high. Obtaining these drugs are as easy as opening someone’s medicine cabinet.

Illegally obtained prescription drugs are sold or given away at school or at parties. Teens and young adults are attending prescription pill popping parties known as “pharm parties.” At these parties, “trail mix” – bowls and baggies of random pills – are mixed and consumed. These mixes are often lethal. Teens pooling these pills think they are “having a good time on a Saturday night” and don’t think about the consequences. Overdoses of prescription and over-the-counter drugs accounted for about one-quarter of 1.3 million drug-related emergency room admissions last year.

There are several things we can do to ensure we aren’t contributing to this alarming trend. The availability of prescription drugs is the big reason for the rise in abuse. Instead of receiving a 30 day prescription, ask your physician to only prescribe the number of pills needed. Too often we have left-over medications sitting around which can be stolen or disposed of improperly.

Consider storing your prescription drugs in a secure location. Anyone visiting your home and using your bathroom will have access to medications stored in the cabinet or drawer. While you may trust your family members, should you trust their friends or other visitors who may use your bathroom? This time of year we have visitors, delivery people, cleaners and others who can enter your medicine cabinet and take a few pills. Most people never notice three or five missing pills.

Talk to your family members about prescription drugs. Most teens and college students don’t consider consuming prescription drugs as illegal. Prescription drug abuse means taking a prescription medication that is not prescribed for you, or taking it for reasons or in dosages other than as prescribed. Abuse of prescription drugs can produce serious health effects, including addiction.

Pocatello’s Police and Water Pollution Control Departments have collaborated in securing a medicine drop box. Citizens with unused or left over medications can bring them to the Pocatello Police department at 911 North 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue during regular business hours for disposal. Do not dispose of prescription drugs or over-the-counter medications by flushing them down the toilet or by throwing them in your trash. Pharmaceuticals need to be properly disposed of in order to keep them out of rivers and drinking water. A conscientious effort by all can help reduce the alarming trend of prescription drug abuse, as well as improper disposal.

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