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**COUNTY ATTORNEY'S OFFICE TO EDUCATE EAST-SIDE
STUDENTS ON THE DANGERS OF DRUG TRAFFICKING**

Hundreds of middle and high school students are expected to participate

On Saturday December 5, 2009, attorneys with the Juvenile Unit of the El Paso County Attorney's Office will offer multi-media presentations to elementary, middle and high school students about the dangers of getting involved in drug trafficking activities, and the legal consequences of getting caught.

The presentations will be part of the 2009 Regional Youth Summit, scheduled for Saturday December 5, 2009 at El Dorado High School, 12401 Edgmere Blvd. from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The event is aimed to address the consequences youth face when dealing with risky behavior and poor lifestyle choices, including accepting to participate in drug trafficking activities such as becoming drug mules.

For the past decade, Mexican drug cartels have been actively recruiting teens from area middle and high school to smuggle drugs from Mexico into the U.S. Although during the last couple of years the number of teens arrested at El Paso Ports of Entry accused of drug trafficking has decreased slightly, recently the Texas Department of Public Safety (TDPS) issued a state-wide warning informing unsuspecting parents that violent Mexican cartels and transnational gangs are actively recruiting Texas youngsters in schools and border communities. According to the warning, these criminal organizations are luring teens with the prospect of cars, money and notoriety, and promise them that if they are arrested, they will receive light sentences.

The El Paso County Attorney's Office was the first juvenile prosecutor's office in Texas to implement a zero-tolerance in drug trafficking cases. Previously, teens were detained for a brief period of time and then released to their families either in Mexico or the US. The zero-tolerance program was implemented along with an educational campaign that included radio and television commercials. The initiative helped reduce the juvenile drug arrests in El Paso County from 124 in 2001 to 24 in 2009.

Juvenile Prosecutors from the County Attorneys Office will speak to students about the misconceptions associated with drug trafficking and inform them of the facts and legal repercussions they may face.

WHO: County Attorney's Juvenile Unit

WHAT: International Juvenile Drug Trafficking Presentations

WHEN: Saturday December 5, 2009 from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

WHERE: El Dorado High School

12401 Edgmere Blvd.

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