

## **September Recognized as FASD Awareness and Prevention Month in Ohio**

When a pregnant woman consumes alcohol, so does her unborn child. Each year, nearly 40,000 children are born with mental, behavioral and/or physical challenges resulting from prenatal exposure to alcohol, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA, 2010). These children are born affected by Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD), which according to the U.S. Surgeon General is the leading known cause of preventable birth defects.

Recognizing the gravity of FASD and the impact it has on affected children and their families, Gov. John R. Kasich has designated September as *Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Awareness and Prevention Month* in Ohio. This coincides with national FASD Awareness Day, which has occurred annually on Sept. 9 since 1999. The ninth day of the ninth month was chosen as a reminder to women to abstain from alcohol during their nine months of pregnancy.

According to SAMHSA's 2008 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 10.6 percent of pregnant women age 15 to 44 reported current alcohol use. In addition, 4.5 percent reported binge drinking, which is four or more drinks in a row, and 0.8 percent reported heavy drinking. The number of women who engaged in binge drinking during the first-trimester of pregnancy more than doubled in comparison to the previous survey period.

To help increase awareness of FASD and its life-long effects, the State of Ohio created a task force in 2003, which is composed of several state agencies, prevention professionals, educators and parents/caregivers of children with FASD. The task force promotes abstaining from alcohol during pregnancy to prevent FASD, urging women not to drink a single drop.

For more information and resources about FASD, please visit Ohio's FASD Initiative website at [www.notasingledrop.org](http://www.notasingledrop.org).