

Parents can cut off drinking by teen-agers in homes

In high school, not a weekend goes by that you don't hear of a teen-age drinking party. Many of those parties are held in homes in our communities. Where are the parents who live in those homes?

I have a great concern that there are parents in our communities who are either allowing alcohol to be served in their homes or are not paying attention to what their children are doing when they are away from the home. A number of parents are aware of what is going on, and they put up with it ... and no one does anything about it.

If we allow teen-agers to drink on weekends, the result of this permissive attitude will be that we will lose a number of our young people to alcohol/drug problems and possibly even death. Is it going to take another teen-ager to die for this situation to change? We have learned that the only approach that parents and schools can have on this issue is zero tolerance.

It is true that parents have civil liability for everything that goes on in their homes, whether they are present or not. It is also true that there is a legal law in this state that does not per-



mit underage drinking.

When parents go out of town, they want to trust their teen-age children. The reality is that it is usually the other kids that you can't trust. There are hundreds of kids in our communities who are driving around on weekends looking for parties. There is a scenario played out over and over again on weekends where your son or daughter has a few friends over; there is a knock on the door, when it is opened

five or 10 kids push their way in with alcohol and the party begins. Most teen-agers want to be accepted by their peers and so they don't stop the "gatecrashing," and as a result, there is lots of drinking and, in many cases, vandalism to your home.

Parents can stop this open access to their homes when they are gone. First, let your neighbors know that you are going to be out of town, and if they hear or see anything, ask them to get involved. Second, have someone in charge of your home when you are gone (other than your son or daughter) whom your neighbor can call on for help. Third, let all of the parents of your child's closest friends know that you will be gone on certain dates. And finally, tell the police when you will be gone so they can drive by.

Teen-age drinking is illegal and dangerous. One of the ways to lick this problem in our communities is to bring focus and real pressure on homes where it is taking place. Parents have to get involved and help, even when they are out of town.

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