

# Florida spring break a bad idea for teens

BY MICHAEL D. HALL

Guest columnist

At this time of the year, teachers start hearing students talk about going to Florida on spring vacation. In the last few weeks, a number of parents have asked me if I would ever let any of my three daughters go unchaperoned to Florida at spring vacation when they were attending high school. My answer was and has always been a very firm, "No way."

Some say they let their children go because it is preparation for college. The only connection I can see is that it might be preparation for dropping out of college. If parents are sending their children to Florida to gain learning experiences, here is a list of some experiences they might have: (1) alcohol abuse; (2) introduction to hard drugs; (3) date rape; (4) sexual promiscuity; (5) driving under the influence; and (6) how to make and use a false ID.

In most spring vacation towns, happy hour seems as much a basic part of the day as afternoon tea in England. Bars run specials when women can drink free: dollar beers; free beers; two-for-one beers. A small amount of money allows students to abuse alcohol no matter what town they go to.

Hard drugs such as marijuana, LSD, PCP, Rohypnol (Roofies) and all kinds of designer drugs are everywhere. Many of the drugs are cheap. Some people give drugs away hoping for future sales or sexual favors. The other day I called a friend who is a federal drug agent to ask about any new drugs being used in Florida. The agent told me about a small pill called Ketamine, used as an anesthetic on cats. Young men have been using Ketamine to slip into young women's drinks to lower their sexual inhibitions.

I have seen a number of young people go to Florida on spring vacation with the intention of trying some of these hard drugs. Some return home addicted — a

## GUEST OPINION

*It is true that teens are naturally rebellious and do not give up easily. It is also true that teens need guidance and firm limits.*

**Michael D. Hall is principal of Anderson High School.**



condition they have to deal with for the rest of their lives.

Many students have gone to Florida for spring break and have had a wonderful experience. They have enjoyed themselves and their behavior has been excellent. Many made a decision ahead of time not to use alcohol or other drugs — but the peer pressure and temptation are great. Some are able to stick by their commitment and some are not.

Deciding whether or not to let your son or daughter go is a tough one. Some parents give in because they are tired of fighting with their teen-ager. It is true that teens are naturally rebellious and do not give up easily. It is also true that teens need guidance and firm limits. My best advice is to set limits and say no to the unchaperoned part.

My recommendation:

Some students have told me they were relieved when their parents went along to Florida because they did not have the temptation to do something not in their best interests. So take the whole family (if you can afford it) and consider allowing your son or daughter to take a friend.