

Party Season

It's party season – prom, graduation; celebrations abound. As parents, you play a major role in your children's choices about alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. What choices are *YOU* making?

- Did you know that as a parent you cannot give alcohol to your teen's friends under the age of 21 – **under any circumstance** – even in your own home, even with their parent's permission. And you cannot knowingly allow anyone under 21 – other than your own child – to remain in your home or on your property while consuming or possessing alcohol.
- Most people don't know the social hosting laws. You might wonder why you even should. Consider how expensive it is to NOT know. For instance, you could land in jail for six months or find yourself getting slapped with a \$1,000 fine for violating these laws. And that doesn't even begin to touch on the life-changing consequences if a tragedy occurs.
- Alcohol use by young people is not only dangerous; it's unhealthy as it threatens development and well-being.

Parents also often underestimate how often alcohol is served at parties their kids attend. Just ask your kids – you might be surprised at what you hear and what you learn.

Communities That Care of Lorain County through the ***Parents Who Host Lose the Most: don't be a party to teenage drinking*** campaign is providing educational materials to raise awareness about this illegal and unhealthy practice. You'll see yard signs and banners around the county – at schools, businesses and athletic fields. We'll be at the Lorain County Commissioners on April 28, on local talk radio stations and Public Service Announcements will air from May 10-23 and feature the voices of Lorain County youth and parents talking about the campaign. Look for Letters to the Editor from coalition members. Pledge to host alcohol-free events this party season, supervise youth in your home and at others'.

On Thursday, May 6 from 6:30-8:30 p.m., a World Café on underage drinking will be held for parents and caregivers at Amherst's Marion L. Steele High School in the cafetorium. This free event will give you a chance to hear what youth are saying, monitoring youth - we're calling this one "Homeland Security" and having the Big Talk – yes, the one about alcohol, tobacco and drugs.

Have you even outlined your expectations with your kids? Get the conversation started – and start talking *before* the problems begin. Simple things like being clear on where the party is, who will be attending and who will be supervising the evening's activities are all important things to know.

Nearly 70% of over 10,000 Lorain County youth surveyed last fall said they depend on their parents when it comes to making important decisions (*2009 Youth Survey, conducted by Communities That Care of Lorain County*).

So, at this time of year, don't do any less – especially when it comes to risky behavior.

Protect yourself and others by following some simple guidelines:

- Refuse to supply alcohol to anyone under 21.
- Be home when your teen has a party.
- Set a start and end time for the party.
- Call parents if someone arrives intoxicated; if you can't get in touch with the parents, call police, if necessary.

- Invite other parents to help chaperone.
- Make sure other youth don't bring alcohol into your home.
- Talk to other parents about hosting alcohol-free events.
- Have plenty of food and non-alcoholic beverages available.
- Refuse to supply alcohol to those underage.
- Report underage drinking.

It's not easy being a parent. We're here to support you in your efforts. Ask questions. Be there for your kids. Celebrate safely; pledge to host alcohol-free parties, and supervise.

This message brought to you by Communities That Care of Lorain County, a Drug Free community coalition working to reduce and prevent underage substance abuse. For more information, call 440.282.9920 or check out www.ctcloraincounty.org