

PARENTS WHO HOST LOSE THE MOST

Many parents will be hosting parties for their children during this prom and graduation season. S.M.A.R.T., Inc. (Southbury & Middlebury Acting Responsibly Together) would like to suggest that parents and influencing adults should consider some important factors. Social hosting is providing and/or serving alcohol to a young person who is under the minimum age of 21. Social hosting can take place in a party-like atmosphere or by an adult simply providing alcohol to teenagers for them to drink. It can even extend to parents and homeowners who are not on the premises and did not provide the alcohol. Underage drinking is a factor in 41% of teen automobile accidents and 32% of all teen driving deaths.

There are many consequences to *hosting* a party where underage drinking occurs.

- You may have your driver's license suspended, pay a fine, and/or serve jail time.
- Homeowner's insurance can increase.
- You may be held civilly liable. Any injuries or accidents that may result could end in lawsuits.
- You could be held responsible for medical bills, property damages, pain and emotional suffering.
- You may suffer from negative press in local radio, TV and newspapers.
- Someone could be seriously injured or killed under your watch.

The Search Institute published the results of a survey of Developmental Assets in our Region 15 School District in February 2011.

The good news is 1,763 students from grades six through 12 in Southbury and Middlebury participated in an assessment called Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors. In it, 59% of our children reported feeling safe at home, school and in their neighborhood. 45% of students surveyed believe it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

Underage drinking is never acceptable. It is against the law. Parents and adult influencers need to do all they can to create an environment where young people steer clear of dangerous drugs and illegal situations. Here are some suggestions:

- Set a good example
- Speak openly with your teen and let them know what your expectations are. Set clear guidelines, boundaries and consequences.
- Get to know your teen's friends and their parents. Make an effort to always know what your child is doing and with whom.
- Insist that your teen check in with you regularly. If they are attending a party or staying at a friend's house, call or drop by to check in on them.

- Learn what your teen’s goals and desires are and discuss how underage drinking can affect their dreams, relationships and futures.

Parents and other adults have the greatest influence on the lives of young people. It is the duty of every adult in our communities to ensure that our children grow up to be happy, productive, drug-free adults themselves. As we head into a season of happy events--prom, graduations and summer holidays-- helping our children make healthy choices is the best way to celebrate.

Information for this article was compiled from “Social Hosting: Parents, Parties and Underage Drinking” and Developmental Assets: A Profile of Your Youth for Regional District 15. For more information on underage drinking and social hosting issues, visit these resources: <http://www.alcoholfreechildren.org>, <http://www.al-anon.org>.

<http://www.madd.org>, <http://stopalcoholabuse.gov>, <http://alcoholpolicymd.com> and <http://www.niaaa.nih.gov>

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To learn more about SMART, visit their website at www.smartinc.org , or their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/region15SMART> or call Noel Federle, 203-788-5199.