



MIDDLESEX COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE

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Dear Parents:

Prom and graduation season is upon us. Congratulations on a job well done! We, at the Middlesex County Prosecutor's Office, hope that you and your family enjoy this very important and exciting time in your lives.

It is during this time of celebration that we must be especially careful and diligent. Our children are under enormous peer pressure to drink, use illicit drugs, abuse prescription drugs and engage in other risky behavior. The pressure on parents to allow drinking and drugging during this season nearly equals the peer pressure placed on our children. It is important for us to do everything in our power to combat this peer pressure and discourage underage drinking and drugging.

When our children drive under the influence, they are at risk to kill or seriously injure themselves and others. This simple, but chilling fact, requires no further explanation. Hopefully, it is all the motivation that we need to ensure that we, as parents, act responsibly when addressing the issue of alcohol and drug use during prom and graduation season.

Driving under the influence can destroy our children's lives in other ways as well. Few parents realize the virtual certainty that their child will be sent to jail for a term of years if he or she kills someone in an alcohol related crash. Impaired drivers who kill or seriously injure others are going to go to jail. It is the duty of all parents to protect their children from ruining their lives and the lives of others.

Even a simple drunk driving arrest which is not related to a car crash will cost a first offender many thousands of dollars in fines, surcharges, legal fees, increased insurance premiums, etc., as well as the loss of his or her driver's license for at least three months and possibly even a year. Most of us would agree that this is hardly the way we would want our children to begin their adult lives.

It is important for parents to understand that they too may suffer legal consequences that result from underage drinking. Anyone who provides alcohol to a person who is not of legal age is guilty of a crime. More importantly, if the underage drinker then becomes involved

in a fatal or serious motor vehicle collision, the parent who provided the alcohol can be sued and held liable for substantial monetary damages. The same holds true even when the parents do not supply the alcohol, but rather provide the environment or safe haven in which young adults under the age of 21 are permitted to drink. In other words, parents who purposely, knowingly, or negligently allow underage drinking in their homes can be successfully sued ***even if they did not furnish the alcohol.***

Our young adult children are vulnerable to temptations and are susceptible to peer pressure. You can help keep them safe by doing such simple things as securing your prescription medication and alcohol, and by making your expectations clear by speaking with your children about these issues. Our goal is to help you protect your children, as well as yourselves. By insisting on an alcohol and drug-free prom and graduation season, together, we can ensure that our children will arrive home safely.

Finally, I am asking you to please speak to your children about the perils of driving while tired and fatigued. Please understand that driving while fatigued is as dangerous as drunk or drugged driving. It has long been popular for students to drive down to the shore immediately following their prom and graduation celebrations, despite the fact they are tired and have been awake for 24 hours or more. We must do everything in our power to discourage this dangerous tradition. Drivers who fall asleep at the wheel and cause fatal accidents may now be prosecuted for vehicular homicide (N.J.S.A. 2C:11-5). It is imperative that we not allow our young drivers to succumb to driver fatigue and become either a fatal accident statistic or a criminal defendant.

We sincerely wish you a memorable, safe and happy prom and graduation season. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions, please contact our Community Affairs Agent, Reginald Johnson at (732) 745-8430, or Reginald.Johnson@co.middlesex.nj.us. Thank you for your help, assistance, and understanding regarding these important issues.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew C. Carey', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

ANDREW C. CAREY

Middlesex County Prosecutor