**Prom Safety**

Dear Editor:

We are once again, in the midst, of another Prom season. It’s always a beautiful sight to see young adults get all dressed up to attend a dance many have dreamed of attending for a long time. Prom is an important rite of passage for teenagers and while they’re dancing the night away, their parents are usually pacing the floor. For many, prom season is also a time that brings a lot of anxiety, for many, concerning the safety of those attending the prom. Unfortunately, many teens feel that they must consume alcohol and/or drugs before, during or after their prom and may participate in other risky behaviors. According to the Century Council, the months of April, May and June are the most dangerous time for teens. One-third of alcohol related traffic fatalities involving teens each year occur during these three months. Alcohol related traffic accidents continues to be the biggest killer of teens, taking about 3,000 young lives every year as noted by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Additionally, the CDC also states that young drivers (ages 16 – 20) are 17 times more likely to die in a car crash when they have a BAC of .08% or higher than a young driver that has not been drinking at all.

With proper planning, open communication and appropriate monitoring, teens can have a fun and safe prom and make lasting memories. Here are some suggestionsas you prepare your son or daughter for the prom,

**Parents: Have a Plan**

1. Talk to your teenage about your concern about celebrating without alcohol or other drugs.
2. Know the plan for the evening and make sure your teen knows that you are available to pick them up any time if necessary.
3. If teens are driving to the prom, make sure everyone wears a seatbelt and limit the number of passengers in the vehicle.
4. Discuss any plans for post-prom activities. Call the host parents and ask questions about supervision. Assure no alcohol will be allowed.
5. If you are hosting an after-prom party, enlist the help of other parents to be chaperones.
6. If the teens are using a limo service, talk directly to the driver, or owner, to discuss your expectations for an alcohol or drug free ride and no extra stops to and from the prom.
7. Wait up for your teen to arrive home and greet them. Be sure to acknowledge them for making good decisions.
8. Go on-line and print a copy of the **“Contract for Life”.** This contract can be found under the Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) or Student’s Against Drunk Drinking (SADD) websites. For both contracts, parent(s) and teen pledge to not drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs or not get in the car of someone who has been drinking or using drugs and promise not to challenge death. The teen promises to call for a safe ride home if they are unable to find one. The parent agrees to come and get them, at any time, with no questions asked at that time. The goal is to get the teen home safely.

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