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Students, Parents and Guardians

In November 2009, Nantucket High School Senior and *Veritas* Assistant Editor Georgie Morley wrote a compelling editorial about the problem of underage drinking on Nantucket. A copy of this editorial can be found on the back of this page. Ms. Morley has asked the adults in the community to be more responsible, to look at the island's unhealthy relationship with alcohol and to make it not so easy for young people to drink.

Our young people are looking to us, as parents and leaders in our community, to make good choices and to lead by example. By becoming aware of what our responsibilities are, including understanding what laws are in place to help us deal with the pressures around underage alcohol access, we can better prepare ourselves for these challenges.

Nantucket High School is partnering with the Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, Drug Free Communities Support Program, Nantucket Behavioral Health Services, Nantucket Police Department and the Nantucket Suicide Prevention Coalition because we all believe that as adults and leaders in our community, education around alcohol and the law will help us make decisions to keep children healthy and safe. In addition, we want Ms. Morley to know we read her article and we support her and are acting on her request.

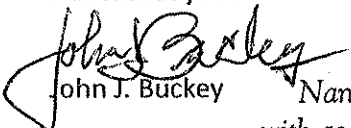
On April 12, 2010 from 6:30 pm to 8:00 pm in the school auditorium, Attorney Mark Hoover, of Campbell Campbell Edwards and Conroy P.C., will be presenting to the community, the firm's "*Be a Parent, Not a Pal*", multimedia presentation. This presentation is designed to educate students, parents, teachers and the community about Massachusetts Social Host Liability (M.G.L. Chapter 138, Section 34) and to illustrate the legal consequences of providing alcohol to someone under 21.

This presentation has been given in over 60 schools in the state, often as part of a Schools' Parent Prom Program. Nantucket High School joins a growing number of high schools in the state and across the country that are requiring a parent or guardian to attend these sessions if their high school aged son or daughter plans to go to the Junior Prom or Senior Ball. Students are encouraged to attend with their parent or guardian and the presentation is open to the general public.

Research shows that this is the time of year when underage youth are at greatest risk for taking part in high risk behaviors, such as drinking and drug use. The 2009 Nantucket High School Youth Risk Behavior Survey indicated that 77% of students surveyed stated that access to alcohol on the island is easy, with the majority reporting that alcohol is most often obtained from parents and/or family.

The April 12 forum will be live and include a question and answer period. This forum will be taped and re-shown on three other dates to ensure that all parents have an opportunity to attend the "*Be a Parent, Not a Pal*" presentation. The enclosed card shows all of the dates and times of the presentations. Please bring this card with you for validation of your attendance. Your son or daughter will need this validated card to purchase Junior Prom or Senior Ball tickets. **Parents are encouraged to arrive 15 minutes early to sign in.**

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 508-228-7280. Thank you for your help in keeping Nantucket youth safe.


John J. Buckey

Nantucket High School will provide students a variety of opportunities to graduate with academic, social, and civic skills necessary to become self-directed, lifelong learners.

AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER

There is no point in hiding the fact that living on Nantucket limits teens' options of places to go on a Friday night in the off-season. The sad thing is that, the isolation of Nantucket has narrowed teens' perception of fun. I am talking about an issue that has been prevalent for decades at Nantucket High School: underage drinking.

Not only is drinking a popular weekend pastime for many high school students, but it is also an issue that parents have been turning a blind eye to for as long as it has been a problem. While a majority of parents claim that they do not condone underage drinking, they continue to let their kids go out, knowing full-well where and what their kids are doing. Some parents even allow their kids to drink, as long as their son or daughter promises not to drive. Scariest of all, are the parents who knowingly let their kids drink at their house, sometimes even supplying the alcohol.

Although this last example is not as common, a lot of responsible adults are still falling victim to the same peer pressure we as teens are facing. I think it is accurate to assume that most parents strive to form good relationships with their kids. This said, not many parents want to play the bad guy more than they have to. Telling their kids to be responsible and make safe decisions is often enough to ease their consciences.

Knowingly letting kids drink is closer to directly giving them alcohol than most like to believe. If you think about it, if your kid is going out to a party where you know alcohol is being served and you do nothing about it, it is almost as bad as giving alcohol to them yourself. Don't ask, don't tell might function for the army but it should not be the same policy you use with your own children when it comes to drinking.

I am not saying parents are not doing their job. As a teenager I know how charming, convincing, persuasive and generally skilled we are at getting our way. But I also know that even though we like to think we are always right, we do make mistakes. And while I may later regret saying this, I think it needs to be said: It is the job of parents to tell us no, to tell us we cannot get everything we want. There really are other ways to have fun other than drinking.

I am not saying that adults should use the because I said so explanation, but I think the community's parents and responsible adults have to step up their game. The excuse that kids will drink no matter what, so we might as well let them do it responsibly is bs. The truth is, that perception is so prevalent that it is a self-fulfilling prophecy. Adults turn the blind eye, kids drink responsibly, then adults say that there is nothing we can do about it and the cycle repeats.

As soon as the culture changes from turning the other cheek to real consequences, that is when things will *really* change. Teenagers do not have to drink to have fun. We do not have to drink to experience being a teenager. Putting alcohol in our growing bodies does not help us in any way. Drinking does not have to be a part of growing up on Nantucket if we actively try to change the complacency in our community. So as a kid, I am asking for more guidance, for more adults to be better role models, and prove that drinking is not okay for anyone in high school no matter how safe adults try to make it.

Georgie Morley, Assistant Editor, *Veritas*, November 2009