

## **AODA LETTER – by Mike Montgomery of Sparta**

It is time to step forward and say NO to teen drinking in our schools and community. Maybe it has always been something that we tolerated or even expected. But those times have to be over. There is too much at stake and too much to lose. As school officials we have overlooked and under emphasized this problem thinking that if no one gets hurt then maybe it isn't really a problem. Our memories are short when drinking related tragedies are involved, but they do happen and way too frequently all around us. As parents we want our sons and daughters to have fun and be popular with their peers. Maybe we did the same things when we were younger and we turned out all right and maybe too often we were just lucky. I don't think we want to rely on luck to keep our children from seriously hurting themselves or others by doing something we can prevent. As parents, you are central to preventing teen drug use. Kids themselves say that losing their parents' trust and respect are the most important reasons not to use drugs and alcohol.

As a community we support our children's efforts in recreational leagues, school activities and educational programs, but what do we do to ensure they do not become an alcohol related fatality or statistic? Parties are being held at someone's house, liquor is being bought or supplied by someone illegally, and teens are driving to and from parties under the influence and someone's son or daughter is riding with them. Not only is it against the law to sponsor or host these parties or supply liquor for them, but what happens if someone gets seriously hurt? Are you willing to deal with those feelings and face the parents of someone who was seriously injured or killed?

I certainly do not consider myself an example of what students should be like; I fit into that lucky category. I do however enjoy working with our students as they experience all the ups and downs of high school life and mature into young adults. I want to see them have the best experiences possible in the short time they are here. These kids have so much to gain in their young lives and even more to lose by making drugs and alcohol a more important priority.

Over the course of this school year we will make efforts to educate and inform our students on the harm that drugs and alcohol can do to their lives. We will challenge them to make a commitment to be drug free. We will also provide parents with information on how to recognize and deal with potential problems in their home and offer strategies for helping their child deal with the pressures to drink and in finding safe alternatives.

As parents, we need to develop open and honest lines of communication for them. If you expect them not to drink, be willing to listen to them talk about the pressures to drink. Above all, set a good example; analyze your own drinking habits and adjust those habits so that they are consistent with what you are telling your son or daughter.

Homecoming is just around the corner; everyone needs to play a part in making it a safe and fun week of activities.

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Received Sept. 2004 -- for use in the Resource area on WADA web site