Teen Party Suggestion: Help Create a Safe Social Gathering

Many South Eugene High School parents have been voicing concerns recently about the parties their daughters and sons are hosting and attending. The Parent Council has been asked to share some ideas about how to create safe social settings.

The underlying principle is safety. This is the touchstone. It is unlikely that any of your parents would head out on the town without telling your teenager where you are, whom you're with, and when you plan to be home. Parents should be able to expect the same level of consideration from their teenagers.

The experts suggest communicating and creating clear guidelines in advance. Trying to impose guidelines as your son or daughter is walking out the door may be interpreted as meaning, "I don't trust you tonight!" The goal is to talk with your child about your concerns, keep communication open, and build trust. Following are some topics and guidelines you might want to discuss with your child - realizing that these may be adapted as your teen gets older.

If you are the parent of a student invited to a party:
1. Talk with the parent who is hosting the party. You can use the South phone directory to get contact information. You might make this a routine whenever you don't know the parents well. You may want to ask whether the parent intends to check in on the kids throughout the evening. Although it might feel uncomfortable, other important questions might reflect your concerns about the presence of alcohol, drugs, or guns in the home.

2. Clarify the host's expectations about arrival and departure times, and transportation arrangements. Pick your child up at the time the host specifies, and be clear about this with your teenager.

3. If this is the first time your teen has visited this home, consider walking to the door to meet the host. You may want to ask whether there will be parents visible throughout the entire party. Your son or daughter may be embarrassed, but he or she will recover. Remember, the issue is whether this is a safe place, not whether you believe and trust your child.

4. Thank the parent for hosting the party. Consider offering to help with refreshments or chaperoning.
If you are hosting the party:

1. Yes, you are legally responsible. You have the right and responsibility to check for controlled substances and inappropriate behavior. Walking through a room to refill the popcorn bowl needn't create a problem for kids. If it does—figure out why.

2. Maintain an open door policy within the house. Closed doors during the party create potentially dangerous situations.

3. Be clear about parameters. When is it over? (The city's curfew is midnight. See boxed information. Some South Eugene parents feel that ninth graders' parties should end around 10 p.m., tenth graders' around 11 p.m., but this is clearly something you should discuss.) How many guests have been invited? Who are they. You or your child should answer the door, and only invited guests should be admitted. Guests are expected to stay at the party. Kids wandering off might get hurt.

4. Encourage other parents to attend and possibly co-host, if you're on your own. This is not to impugn your parenting skills... no adult can single-handedly supervise a large group of teens. These policies may not put you in the running for the Year's Most Popular Parent, but you're improving the odds that your child will be safe. And if we South Eugene parents agree on safety issues, at least we can say, "But all the other kids' parents are doing it, too".

Did you know?
The Eugene City Ordinance has a curfew for individuals under the age of 18 after midnight.

The only exceptions are:
* If in the company of a parent or guardian.
* In the company of an adult who is carrying written permission from a parent or guardian for that time and date.
* Traveling to and from work or a religious meeting.
* On a mission of mercy