

NORTH HUNTERDON HIGH SCHOOL

*Michael P. Hughes
Principal*

*John P. Hahola, Jr.
Assistant Principal*

*Irene Dolan
Assistant Principal*



*Josephine McCaffrey
Director of Guidance*

*John Deutsch
Director of Athletics*

*Michael Gleason
Disciplinarian*

May 24, 2006

Dear Parents and Guardians:

In so many ways, this is the happiest time of the year. The weather is nice, AP exams are over, prom is just a couple of weeks away, and graduation is right around the corner. It is a time of celebration. It also is a time when students and parents must make critical decisions about alcohol.

Some parents supply alcohol for their children's parties or turn a blind eye when their children and their friends bring alcohol into their homes. Parents, attempting to protect their underage guests, may take their car keys and hold them until morning to prevent their guests from driving while intoxicated. Nevertheless, despite these precautions, the actual legal ramifications of this familiar scenario are, pardon the pun, sobering.

It is important to note that many people believe underage drinking in the privacy of their homes is acceptable and within the limits of the law. However, according to NJSA 40:48-1.2, underage drinking is illegal, whether it occurs in public or on private property. Perhaps even more worrisome are a series of "Social Host" laws and legal decisions that place the blame and the burden of consequences of underage drinking squarely onto the shoulders of parents. The New Jersey Supreme Court has ruled that hosts who supply alcohol are liable for injuries resulting from alcohol intoxication. If the individual providing alcohol is a minor, his or her parents are legally responsible for any injuries, even those to third parties. Section 260.20(2) of the Penal Code has been interpreted to place criminal liability on parents who permit alcohol to be served to minors, whether by supervising the party where alcohol was served, leaving liquor cabinets unlocked, or leaving their children unattended knowing that there was a reasonable likelihood that their children might drink or serve alcohol. Even when parents do not permit alcohol at their children's parties, if guests smuggle alcohol into the home, the parents are criminally liable for any injuries if they do not intervene "in a reasonable manner and within a reasonable time."

We hope that this graduation/prom season will be the best of times for our students and their parents. Therefore, we ask that our parents and students as a family take the "Safe Homes" pledge (see attached), and return to us this public promise to provide an alcohol-free environment for our children. We will make available a list of families that take the "Safe Homes" pledge, so parents can talk with their children and help them make informed choices.

Sincerely,

Michael P. Hughes
Principal