

Parents gear for a safe graduation season

By Casey Hane
staff writer

As graduation nears, high school students using drugs, drinking alcohol and driving becomes a community concern.

A recent college study revealed a drunken person is 100 times more likely to die in a car crash than a sober person.

While Farmington-area parents coordinate all-night graduation parties for high school seniors to address the issue, police, school groups and others with a community interest also get involved.

A New York college study found the sixth beer or wine cooler is the dramatic drink when it comes to the chances of being killed in a car crash.

With four or five drinks, a teenager increases his risk 10 times. The sixth drink sends the risk soaring to 100 times more likely than a sober teen.

ONE LOCAL parent group has addressed the problem in the Farmington primarily through education and working with the school district.

Farmington Families in Action — a longtime supporter of student parties without drugs and alcohol — financially supports all the all-night graduation parties, past president Betty Nicolay said.

Another community group, the recently formed Committee for Juvenile Justice, plans to publish a pamphlet for high school seniors about the responsibilities and laws involving substance abuse.

"These kids need a unified message from the community," said Nicolay, also a member of the CJJ group.

"Farmington as a community wants these kids to have a good time and a safe time — a drug-free time."

THE GROUP'S brochure could be given to individual students, or used in student group presentations, such as the ones scheduled for North Farmington students on May 6.

Small groups of seniors will meet with staff members to discuss student responsibility as prom and graduation season nears, Norm Dixon said.

Events such as school-sponsored dances and all-night graduation parties "give the kids a place to go where they don't feel pressured," said Dixon, who is a committee member and assistant principal at North Farmington High School.

Pre-graduation meetings are also held with parents, where school administrators, local police and members of Farmington Families in Action speak to parents about their responsibilities. Laws, including the local host party ordinance, are detailed.

HIGH SCHOOL administrators and parent groups have helped decrease problems during the induction season — one of the Farmington Hills police department's busiest times, said Sgt. Ray Cranston, traf-

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— Betty Nicolay,
Committee for
Juvenile Justice

fic section supervisor.

"I can speak from our experience," he said. "The schools have made a concerted effort . . . to make students aware. They're actually spending time on the materials."

"It hasn't resolved the problem, but there has been a definite impact."

The police stay in contact with the schools, so dates of specific student activities can be noted and problems averted.

From May to August, most of the Hills patrol is placed on afternoon, early evening and midnight shifts to handle any problems.

TWO OFFICERS from Farmington Hills were trained in the national "Scared Stiff" program, a "one-time, high-impact program" for students.

The Hills has proposed the program to Farmington schools and local par-

atrol high schools, which are considering it — probably for the next school year, he said.

"It's a very emotional, highly traumatic program," he said.

Fifteen high school districts in the metro Detroit area, including Southfield and Bloomfield Hills, their 800 schools nationally have used the program.

No teenage deaths due to drinking and driving have been reported by schools using the program, Cranston said.

Cranston hopes local schools participate in the program. Across the nation, other suggestions are being made.

Teenagers "grossly underestimate" their chances of being killed in a car crash after they've been drinking, professor Charles Phelps said.

A public policy analyst at Rochester (N.Y.) University, Phelps is proposing putting a warning label, similar to those on cigarette packs, on every can of beer or wine cooler bottle. The most popular alcoholic beverages with teens, he said.

The label would read: "WARN-

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At last year's graduation party at North Farmington High School, senior Valerie Rimatzki (left) signs Anton Lucigona's yearbook.

Public support key to parties' success

By Casey Hane
staff writer

Parents want to give seniors from the Class of '87 a gift they'll never forget.

Groups of parents at three local public high schools — Farmington, Harrison and North Farmington — are well on the way to planning all-night graduation parties to be held in each school building. Organizers said they are hoping for up to 90 percent attendance.

Each party follows graduation ceremonies at Ford Auditorium in downtown Detroit.

• Harrison High School's "Beach Party" will be held Tuesday, June 9. Doors will open at 10 p.m.

• North Farmington High School's "Bon Voyage" will be held Wednesday, June 10. Doors will be open from 10:45-11:30 p.m.

• Farmington High School's "Endless Summer" will be held Thursday, June 11. Doors will be open from 11 p.m. to midnight. The parties will end at 5 a.m., organizers said.

"THE SUCCESS of the party depends on how well the parents support it," said Harrison co-chairman Jim Culbertson. "They key is the parent involvement and parent con-

tribution. We want it to be an enjoyable, all-encompassing 13th hour of senior year."

Also a key to the parties is the community contribution. Parents will spend the next several weeks

knocking on doors within the respective high school boundaries to obtain donations of gifts, food and cash. Both senior parents and local merchants will be asked to help, organizers said. Booster clubs at both North Farmington and Harrison High have donated between \$150 and \$425 for past parties.

The parties are endorsed by the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce.

Seniors enjoy everything from palm readers, to casinos and dunk tanks, to use of the school pool at their parties. Farmington High began a tradition of holding a balloon lift at dawn, as the party ends.

This will be North Farmington's 11th all-night graduation party, and the third for both Harrison and Farmington. Parents credit Farmington Families in Action and past president Betty Nicolay for involving Harrison and Farmington — keeping seniors off the street graduation night and helping them to have a good time.

"WE HAD a great concern with students being out on the highway"

after graduation, said assistant superintendent Lynn Nutter, who was an administrator at North when the first party was planned. "We were worried about their safety."

The senior party was coordinated by a parent advisory group, which had formed at North. Although "it seemed like a massive undertaking" at the time, Nutter said the first party was a success and continued as an annual tradition.

Not only do parents from the three schools share ideas, but parents from other districts are calling as well.

A parent from Waterford Ketter-

ing High School contacted Jody Smith, a co-chairwoman of Farm-

ington High's party. "The parents really do care — it's really nice," she said.

"Parents come out of the woodwork . . . right up until the end," Barb Howell, also of Farmington High, added.

As the countdown to June begins, parents are busy collecting money and booking entertainment — and still looking for a few more volunteers. About two thirds of the parent "work slots" at the three high schools are already filled, the parents said.

Organizers at Harrison face some uncertainty about their party's location — the district is currently in the process of re-doing the gymnasium

floor.

Culbertson said he can't get any answers, which is affecting the parent planning.

"They can't tell us until mid-May whether we'll even have the gym," he said. "We don't even know whether we can have a moonwalk."

Parents or merchants who wish to help or donate money or gifts can contact those chairing the committees at their respective schools.

• Harrison: Jim and Sharon Culbertson, 474-4842.

• Farmington: Barb Howell, 477-5604; or Jody Smith, 478-4497.

• North: Carolyn Lowe, 661-5614; Jack Whitman, 553-9287; or Linda Gunderson, 553-0723.

Co-op work

It helps to keep hours reasonable

By Casey Hane
staff writer

While some national educators criticize students working late hours on school nights, one local administrator said Farmington's co-op program helps students avoid such problems.

Students not involved in the district's co-op program don't have this benefit, however, said June Kilmer, a co-op coordinator for the Farmington district.

There are many students who obtain work permits and find employment on their own, who must monitor their own working time.

All employers must abide by federal and state labor laws. Students 16 or older can work until 10:30 p.m. on school nights and 11:30 on non-school nights, Kilmer said. Some employers, especially restaurants, apply for hour deviations from the labor department to allow students to work later.

Weekly reports of student hours are monitored with Farmington's co-op program. If Kilmer spots a problem with hours, it can be handled immediately. "Students turn in reports, and we review those," she said.

It's important that such co-op jobs be monitored since co-op programs are absolved from following some labor laws because the jobs are considered a "continuing of the school day," she added.

"THERE ARE some incidences where it (working long hours) happens," Kilmer said. Preventing it from happening "is just a matter of

using common sense. They're students, number one, and workers second."

Some educators are concerned that parents are allowing high school students to work long, late hours at outside jobs, which can hurt the quality of the students' classroom work.

It is a growing worry for these educators and youth counselors, as increasing numbers of high school students are lured by part-time jobs that provide money to subsidize cars, social lives and other concerns.

"Parents should set limits on working hours, depending on what they think the child can handle," said Peg Barradale of the National Child Labor Committee, a youth advocacy organization.

"We believe up to a 12-hour week can be a good thing for kids; maybe 20 hours per week, including weekends, for the bright student who can handle it."

As a professional, and parent of five, Kilmer agrees by part-time jobs that provide money to subsidize cars, social lives and other concerns.

CHIEF COUNSEL for the National Child Labor Committee, Dorianne Beyer, said the "complaint system" of regulating child labor laws is ineffective because it places the burden on the child.

"We believe the laws are strict enough, but we favor more intense enforcement, of which there is virtually none."

Barbara Kabeenell, a private student counselor in Farmington Hills, sees some clients with late work hour problems, which does interfere with schoolwork. She suggests parents intercede if a student can't handle the employer.

"A whole pot of stuff is uncovered," she said. Sometimes, co-workers don't understand why the student is seemingly getting special attention from the employer. "It looks like preferential treatment."

Today's students are being "pulled in all directions" Kabeenell added. "I think, especially if they are college bound, they need to keep their grades up." She recommends working no more than 20 hours per week, and that's for the best student.

"A good balance is really what they have to attain," she added.

NATIONWIDE, NEARLY 45 percent of those between 16 and 19 are employed, mostly at part-time or summer jobs, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports.

The bureau cited statistics in one state, where the number of work permits issued to those under 18 jumped from 70,281 in 1984 to 84,118 in 1986.

At North Farmington High School in Farmington Hills, where Kilmer did a recent student survey, most working students were employed in the food service industry — the type of job to most likely require more late-night hours. The second highest number worked in the marketing, or sales, area.

Most working students use their part-time jobs to subsidize cars, wardrobes and social lives, according to researchers.

In one study, Jerald Bachman of the University of Michigan, found that 62 percent of college-bound high school seniors put some of their checks aside for tuition, but only 15 percent saved most of their earnings.

Associated Press contributed to this report.

the Young individualists



Baby Dior prints make top fashion news for the tiniest trendsetter. Blue satins or pink bows on white knit. See our spring collection.

Clockwise: Easy-moving bodysuit of cotton. Infants' sizes S-M-L, \$10. Drawstring gown. Soft polyester. One size, \$11. Receiving blanket of cotton. 30x40", \$16.

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