

Watchwords
By Officer Tom Hanshaw
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We are quickly approaching the end of the 2011-12 school year, which means the season of proms, graduation parties, cook-outs and end-of-year gatherings is near. Although there is nothing wrong with celebrating and traditions, sadly we too often hear of a teen tragedy around this time each year. The legal drinking age in every state is 21 for a variety of reasons. Police agencies, schools and the courts see the effects of underage alcohol use and the damages caused when young people use alcohol. Many communities have adopted a zero-tolerance policy for youths in the possession of alcohol, which means when caught they go to court. The court system has developed a number of diversion programs that encourage youths to stay out of trouble. Everyone makes mistakes and even good kids can make a poor decision but learning from a mistake is the key.

Adults need to be responsible when it comes to youths and alcohol. The feeling that “kids will do it anyway” or “it’s part of growing up” does not justify a tragedy when one occurs. Many young people today have easy access to a car, so one who has been drinking is extremely dangerous. Civil liability should also be a concern; if a young person is injured or killed after drinking at your home, you could be criminally and civilly charged. If you are found responsible, the home insurance will not cover the damages. It’s not worth the risk; there is never a “safe” environment for underage drinking. Officers will be assigned to patrols that address underage drinking in an effort to make our community a safer place, as part of a state-wide effort to deter and detect underage drinking violations.

It’s the time of year when police also remind residents and guests that parking a motor vehicle on the sidewalk is illegal and dangerous. Forcing a pedestrian into the roadway, especially a child, can pose a significant danger. The weight of a motor vehicle can also cause damage to the structure of the sidewalk and in this era of budget trimming, fewer repairs are made. Quite often the intent of a motorist is actually good, feeling he or she is getting the car out of the roadway, making the roadway safer. Unfortunately, if there is not enough room on the road, you should find another location. The fine for a sidewalk parking violation is steep, \$100 in our City. Most communities have higher fines for sidewalk violations due to the seriousness of the offense. Help make our “Sidewalks Safer” by parking in a designated space or off the roadway.

Finally, if you already have a team registered for this year’s Relay For Life of Amesbury or are interested in learning more about the fight against cancer, you are invited to a special “Team Captain” Meeting, on Monday May 14th at 6:30 PM at the Amesbury Health Center, 24 Morrill Place. We’ll have Flatbread Pizza, light refreshments and plenty of information about fighting this terrible disease in our community. This year we are celebrating the 10th anniversary of the American Cancer Society, Relay For Life of Amesbury and hoping to have the biggest Relay yet. Visit www.relayforlife.org/amesburyma today for more details.