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Lamorinda Alcohol Policy Coalition Survey Results

By Sophie Braccini

The Lamorinda Alcohol Policy Coalition recently released the results of a survey that was sent to parents of students in Lamorinda's public middle and high schools in Lafayette/Moraga/Orinda, via the schools' information distribution networks. In a nut shell, although a vast majority of participating parents indicated they themselves refuse to serve alcohol to minors, a significant portion of them know, or suspect, that others do.

Almost half of these interested parents are not sure about the legal consequences of providing, or allowing minors to consume, alcoholic beverages in their homes while they are present. "What this means to me is that the Coalition needs to continue its awareness campaign in Lamorinda," said Coalition Coordinator Jamie Rich.

The first question on the survey asked if parents could provide alcohol to their teen's friends in their home. About 95% of the 484 parents responded 'no' to that question, with only four saying yes and 16 stating that they were not sure. However, 67 said that they were sure that some parents host parties where alcohol is available to teens, and 78 said that this was probably the case — so roughly one-third of parents be-

lieve that other parents are hosting teen parties where alcohol is available. An additional 18% of parents said they were unsure of what is going on in the community.

"I can't say that the results were surprising, I was hoping that most people knew that it is wrong to serve alcohol to minors," said Rich. Asked about the discrepancy between an overwhelming majority of people that refuse to serve alcohol, but more than half of the same people saying that it might be happening, Rich replied, "People who serve alcohol (to minors) probably didn't want to answer the survey," she said, "they would rather not confront the fact that they are doing something that's against the law."

Rich was surprised that most parents have a very limited knowledge of the law, as indicated by responses to a precise question regarding social hosting ordinances. "The Coalition needs to promote the content of the law in Lamorinda," said Rich. "The more visible it is, the more parents are likely to talk to each other about the whole issue. A lot of what I do is promoting discussion among generations and among parents."

Moraga's police chief, Robert Priebe, explains the legal scene.

"The California Penal Code (section 272) characterizes this crime (contributing to the delinquency of a minor) as a misdemeanor with a fine not to exceed \$2,500, or by imprisonment in county jail for not more than 1 year, or by both fine and imprisonment, or by probation not to exceed 5 years," says the Chief, adding that both Moraga and Orinda have enacted Social Hosting Ordinances. "Our local ordinance, passed in 2001, is an infraction with penalties (base fines) of up to \$100 for conviction of first offense, \$200 the second, and \$300 for the third and subsequent convictions. However, the base fines are increased dramatically by state penalties and assessments."

Rich will continue the campaign this summer and fall. The Coalition, which is funded by Contra Costa County Health Services, will be at local events such as Lafayette's Art and Wine Festival. All members of the community are invited to attend the Coalition's meetings that are held monthly from 10:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m. in the Orinda City Hall Community Room, 22 Orinda Way. The next meetings will be on July 20, August 17 and September 21. Jaime Rich can be contacted at Jaime@chd-prevention.org

Please submit

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