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News, Events and Local Information for Newtown, Connecticut.

## Editorial Inkdrops-

### Prom Night Aftermath: Doing The Adult Thing

Prom night is supposed to be a magical night on which teenagers, the masters of informality, are transformed into a formal ideal, gowned and tuxedoed and looking for all the world like they are on their way to dinner with the queen. What we hope is that they are also on their way to becoming the adults they resemble, with all the judgment and good sense that implies. We also hope that on prom night all the bona fide adults responsible for so much of the partying exercise that same judgment and good sense.

We are always disappointed when a few adults open their homes to reveling teens and look the other way as the kegs and cases of beer and liquor start to appear in the party tents in the backyard. It is a dangerous situation for the kids, who are never far from peril when alcohol mixes with their natural high spirits and enthusiasms. Under state law, it is financially dangerous for parents, who are liable for injuries caused by their intoxicated guests. The courts have found the negligence of hosts to be especially egregious when their intoxicated guests are underage.

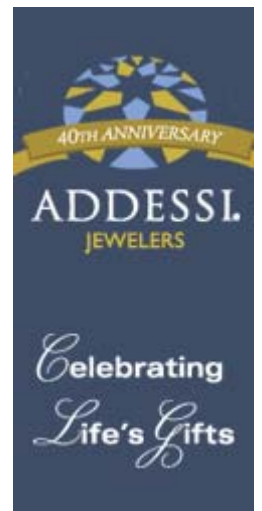
Late last year, the state enacted a law that added enforcement "teeth" to a three-year-old local ordinance prohibiting anyone from hosting a party at which alcoholic beverages are served to minors without the parents or guardians of those minors being present. That ordinance carried only a \$90 fine. The state law, which went into effect last October, imposes fines up to \$500 and possible prison terms of up to a year for repeat offenders. Sadly, some people still have not gotten the message, and the police still get complaints from neighbors about intoxicated teens at parties in private homes. Despite all the efforts of school officials and parents' groups to provide safe and alcohol-free venues for after-prom parties, we are saddened, but not surprised, when the police still must respond to such complaints on prom night. We are surprised, however, when they are called to the home of a member of the Board of Education.

In the early morning hours of May 5, Newtown police went to the home of school board member Thomas Gissen to break up an after-prom party. It was clear to the police that kids were drinking at the party; it should have been clear to the adult hosts who were home that night. Some of the kids were arrested, and the Gissens themselves face charges under local and state laws. Even if they prove in court that their intentions were pure, they should have known better. They should have policed their own party a little better and shut it down when things started to get out of hand so the local authorities didn't have to. And when they lost control of the situation, they should have called the police themselves instead of waiting for others to do it for them.

Newtown voters don't usually get to elect school board members - the local political parties only nominate enough candidates to assure that every seat is uncontested. Still, there should be a political consequence for a lapse in judgment that so severely undermines the message and mission of the Board of Education. In the end, Mr Gissen realized this and did the adult thing. He resigned from the school board.

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