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**To The Editor:**

ARCH would like to take this opportunity to respond to some discussion that has arisen regarding parents who allowed their teenager to host a party in their home where alcohol and marijuana were knowingly present. (ARCH is a community coalition in Tredyffrin and Easttown townships that is working to keep kids alcohol and drug free.) We hear this often. Teens are hosting a party. The parents are home, in another part of the house, silently “pretending” that illegal activity is not occurring.

It is good news when neighbors are paying attention and trying to stop this behavior in our community. However, approaches to this issue should not be tempered with vigilantism type warnings.

There are other ways to tackle this issue. The law provides us with one avenue. Adults are accountable when youth are drinking in their home. By calling the police to anonymously report underage drinking, we allow law enforcement officers to do their jobs and to intervene using whatever resources are deemed necessary to assure safety and clarity of understanding for all involved.

Here is what ARCH encourages:

1. **Be the best parent you can be.** Parents are the first line of defense for their kids. Join other parents who have signed ARCH’s party guidelines (available on [www.ARCHcares.org](http://www.ARCHcares.org)), agreeing you will not serve alcohol to teens, and you will be home and a visible presence when teens are in your home. Listen to your kids and ask questions. Know where they are going, whom they are with, and what they are doing. Network with other parents. Teach your kids to say no and to have the courage to remove themselves from situations where other kids are using. Love your child unconditionally, and never cease to let him know this. Don’t look the other way, take the easy way out, or allow your kids to talk you out of what you need to know to ensure their safety. Model responsible drinking and live by the values you expect of your children.
2. **Be informed. Know which drugs today’s teens are using and how to recognize the symptoms of drug use.** Two websites worth checking out are [www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com) and [www.family.samhsa.gov/](http://www.family.samhsa.gov/).
3. **Report underage drinking.** Call 1-888-UNDER-21 (1-888-863-3721). This line is answered 24 hours. Not only is it against the law for kids under age 21 to drink, it is also against the law for adults to serve them.
4. **Know where to get help.** The Chester County Drug and Alcohol Information and Referral Line (24 hours) will help you access assessment and treatment in our community: 1-866-ATOD-SOS (1-866-286-3767). The Coad Group, 610-363-6164, has a resource room that is open to the public, and a staff that can help link you to a host of other resources in the county.

The majority of kids in our community are NOT drinking or using other drugs. Parents are the most effective tools in keeping kids safe. Be willing to monitor and discipline your children reasonably and consistently. If you learn that your child is experimenting with drugs, act immediately to confront her with your findings, and be willing to do whatever it takes to stop drug use. Contact ARCH at [www.ARCHcares.org](http://www.ARCHcares.org) to learn more and to join our community coalition.

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