

Story By Mike Latona

Photo illustration

by Greg Francis

Parties...

and their pitfalls



During this holiday season, many teens' calendars will be crammed with social events ranging from family visits on Christmas, to New Year's Eve parties with their peers.

The family activities may not warrant parental concerns. But as far as New Year's Eve goes, Andrea Record is definitely apprehensive.

Record's daughters Nicole, 18, and Amanda, 16, said they'll probably end up at a New Year's Eve party where they, and other teens, will consume alcohol. Record said she wouldn't forbid them from attending, but that such a setting would raise serious questions on her part.

"I would be worried if there was a lot of irresponsible drinking. I would want to know a few more details about where the party is, whether I can get them home," said Record, who serves as youth minister at St. Dominic's Church in Shortsville.

Part of Record's concern stems from last New Year's Eve, when Nicole and Amanda — who did not drink that night — ended up transporting two friends back from a party.

"They were pretty drunk. They were throwing up all night," Nicole said.

Record said that she'd like to think her daughters don't drink at private parties on

New Year's Eve, or any other time of the year. And yet, she also knows that teens are prone to experimenting with alcohol and ignoring the state's legal drinking age of 21.

"I get very torn. Part of me wants to have that expectation this isn't going to happen," Record remarked.

But, as Nicole said, "That's not the reality." She added that most of the teens she knows are at least occasional drinkers, and that most of the parties she attends are not chaperoned by adults.

Record said she prefers to have open communication with her children about parties, rather than have them sneak around behind her back.

"If they can look me in the eye and tell me they're going to be safe, I try to give them that space," she remarked. "The big issue is lying. I always want to feel I can trust my kid. If they say 'I'm going to the movies' but instead go to an all-night party, I'd hate that."

Rob Chantra's parents didn't cut him any slack when he was among the people caught drinking at a friend's house by that person's parents. Rob's parents grounded their son for six weeks.

Rob admitted that the thrill of experimenting with alcohol was overshadowed by the punishment he received.

"Afterward, it wasn't very exciting — being reprimanded, being yelled at," said Rob, 15, from St. Jerome's Church in East Rochester.

Rob said that he was very angry at being grounded — but as time went on, he began to see that his parents were trying to keep him from falling into a destructive habit. Without discipline, he said, "I would have been on the same track, going to lots of parties."

"It wasn't until afterward that I realized what they did for me, how much they cared about me," he commented.

Since that time, Rob said he's decided to refrain from drinking, even though he still attends parties where drinking occurs.

"I don't really mind when other people do it around me," he said. "A lot of people do it just to fit in. If they think 'He's a goody-goody,' I say 'So, whoopee. I have a better life than you do, anyway.'"

Nicole said she usually has a couple of drinks at parties, but also sets strict bound-

aries for herself. She said she doesn't play drinking games, and doesn't get too friendly with strangers.

"I'm very skeptical. I don't just jump into trusting someone," Nicole said. "I wouldn't go to a party by myself, or be with friends who are going to ditch me."

Her sister Amanda, meanwhile, said that alcohol isn't a requirement in order for her to enjoy a party.

"I wouldn't care. As long as there were close friends there, there doesn't have to be drinking at every party," Amanda said.

In fact, Rob said, he recently attended a diocesan retreat so he could relax with a large group of teens who weren't using alcohol or other drugs.

"One of the reasons I went was to have a good time without all that stuff around me," Rob remarked.

Rob said that the word "party," above all else, should be associated with good times — provided healthy boundaries are observed.

"It's not really a bad word. But it can be," Rob said.

Coming Next (Jan. 7):
Teen Pregnancy

PARTY PRECAUTIONS

In recent years, Jan Borromei has had many discussions with her sons, now 22 and 19, about attending parties.

As a result, Borromei — youth minister at St. John the Evangelist Church in Greece — has a well-developed set of precautionary tips on the subject.


Her first suggestion is to *leave a party where there's drinking*. But realistically, Borromei said, not every teen — including her sons — always exit from parties so readily. So she offered these reminders as well:

☉ *Don't take a ride from someone who's been drinking.* "That doesn't mean they have to be drunk. If they've been drinking at all, don't get in the car," she emphasized.

☉ *Don't hang around someone who's doing drugs.* "If they get busted, you will, too, because you're in the same room."

☉ *Carry a quarter with you. If you're stuck for a ride, call home at any time — even in the middle of the night.* "I won't lecture them then. We discuss it later," Borromei said.

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