

## Back To School Efforts to Address Adult Providers

With the new school year underway, high school events such as football games, homecoming, holiday celebrations and other activities may signal increased opportunities for young people to drink. Middle and high school students report that alcohol is readily accessible; therefore, it is important for parents and other adults to help cut off the easy flow of alcohol to youth.

According to a national study by the American Medical Association in 2005, more than 60 percent of eighth graders and over 80 percent of 10th graders said it was fairly easy or very easy to obtain alcohol. Nebraska law enforcement agencies have conducted consistent alcohol compliance checks and party patrols to address underage drinking and adults who provide alcohol to kids.

"Approximately 22 percent of the alcohol sold in Nebraska is consumed by underage drinkers," said Chief Robert Lausten of the La Vista Police Department. "In order to prevent youth access to alcohol, law enforcement is cracking down on those who provide alcohol to minors. Adults who jeopardize the lives of young people will be held accountable."

On January 1, 2008, Nebraska's dram shop and social host liability law went into effect, allowing adults who host an underage drinking party or provide or sell alcohol to a minor to be held civilly liable if the intoxicated minor injures or kills someone. Additionally, Nebraska's criminal statute allows for a penalty of one year in jail, a \$1000 fine or both for those who provide alcohol to kids.

Recent jail sentences have ranged from two months to a year in jail.

Throughout the fall, law enforcement agencies will target known party locations and ensure that local businesses are not selling alcohol to minors. Similar efforts have resulted in numerous arrests in the past. In May, law enforcement broke up an underage drinking party in Omaha and confiscated 12 kegs of beer. Six individuals from that party were cited with procuring alcohol for a minor. Heightened enforcement efforts are being implemented in coordination with Project Extra Mile's adult-focused awareness campaign entitled *No Free Ride if You Provide. Underage drinking. Adult consequences.*

Unfortunately, underage drinking is a problem that persists throughout the school year and summer months; therefore, it is necessary that communities look for solutions that extend beyond one football game or one homecoming event.

"As adults it's important that we not only serve as positive role models for our youth, but we must also set clear standards and expectations that underage drinking is unacceptable," said Loel Schettler, guidance counselor at Millard North High School.