

## **GOOD COUNSEL: LOCAL ADVICE** **KEEPING TEEN PARTIES ALCOHOL-FREE**

### **RACHEL PENA**

If your teen wants to throw a party, you might have reason to feel nervous. In New York state, parents who host a party at which minors consume alcohol can end up serving a year in jail and paying fines as high as \$1,000. Here are simple tips to reduce the risk of underage drinking:

#### **When your teen hosts**

■ Hand-deliver invitations to a limited number of guests to avoid "open party" situa-

tions. Don't e-mail them.

■ Set a start and end time for the party.

■ Put your phone number on the invitation and a note inviting parents to help chaperone.

■ Make it clear ahead of time that use of alcohol, drugs or tobacco will not be tolerated.

■ Secure your own alcohol and any firearms in a safe place.



**Pena**

■ When guests arrive, let them know that they can't come back if they leave the party.

■ Call parents of any teen under the influence or in possession of alcohol. If you can't get in touch with the parents, keep the teen there. Call the police if necessary. You can be legally liable if you know a teen has been drinking and you let him leave.

■ Visit the party scene

regularly while remaining sensitive to teens' need for privacy.

#### **When your teen is invited**

■ Call the parent in charge to verify that there will be adult supervision.

■ Make certain the host will not serve or allow alcohol. Ask about plans for handling the situation if a teen shows up with alcohol.

■ Offer to help chaperone or bring snacks over.

■ Tell the host that if your

teen leaves the party for another destination, you want to know.

■ Set a curfew for your teen and have her check in with you when she arrives home.

■ Assure your child he can call you to be picked up whenever needed. □

*Rachel Pena is coordinator of Healthy Communities That Care, a program of the Genesee Valley Health Partnership.*