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A Night on the Town Riding along with the Orinda Police Department

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The Moraga Adobe emerges out of the hillside's inky gloom when two Orinda Police officers train their spotlights and flashlights on the structure. Photo Laurie Snyder

himself and his Campolindo friend on the radar of local police. Pryor had simply stopped to make sure the pair was okay, but now had questions about why one ran - and why his 16-year-old buddy refused to give up the name of his "friend."

Police are also seeing increased nightlife at the Moraga Adobe. Teens have been breaking in and trashing the historic property, leaving empty bottles of booze, spray painting offensive graffiti, and scrawling taunts to the police. The area was creepy - even while standing with the experienced and well-armed Pryor and his colleague, Officer Maynard Patacsil.

To hide their partying, teens are employing sophisticated methods - texting about meet-ups and parking their cars blocks away. One group actually broke into the home of an Orinda family away on vacation. Hanging sheets across doorways, the event's planners designated certain rooms as off limits out of some odd form of "respect" for the homeowners.

But what truly troubles police and the legal professionals who end up representing them is the trend to place "responsible teens" in charge of an evening's festivities - as designated drivers and as "teen paramedics" using basic CPR training to keep classmates out of harm's way. By creating a false sense of security, well-meaning youth may inadvertently be ramping up friends' feelings of invincibility and encouraging the inclination to binge drink.

"Deputizing a 'partymedic' is neither a safe nor legal method of ensuring the health and safety of underage drinkers," said juvenile defense attorney, Mary P. Carey. "If a person passes out or loses consciousness while at a party, experience has shown that the individual may be suffering a non-alcohol related health emergency. Such a condition cannot be diagnosed by a high school or college sports medicine student with CPR training. Failure to seek immediate medical care by qualified professionals can, and has increased the peril for those in need, thereby opening up the 'partymedic' and party hosts to civil and criminal liability."

"Students should consider the following," continued Carey. "Would you rather have called for help when it turned out not to be necessary or not have called for help when it was needed? Today, the 911 immunity law offers legal immunity to underage drinkers who call for medical help for an inebriated friend in need."

And, she said, "Acting reasonably and legally cannot be delegated to one or two people at a party. All partygoers will be held to the same legal standard. The law does not absolve one of liability because an actor sought to minimize harm while engaging in an illegal activity. The exception to this is the 911 immunity law."

Jaime Rich of the Lamorinda Alcohol Policy Coalition reminds parents that they can be fined or prosecuted for letting underage kids drink alcohol and suggests sitting down with teens to create an appropriate party plan and guest list, letting friends know in advance that the party is by "invitation only," and then being present the night of the event - as unobtrusive, but regular visitors to the party area .

Pryor and his OPD colleagues want teens and their parents to know that whether partying, speeding, or being stopped by police while just walking down the road, evasion in any form could end up causing you more trouble than if you had just called 911 to help a friend in trouble, stayed put if you caused an accident, or answered an officer's questions truthfully.

The radar squealed as the maroon BMW sped past Orinda Police Officer Chad Pryor's patrol car last Friday night. It was probably a weary commuter just trying to get home, but Pryor can't be sure what he'll find during traffic stops these days so he approached the car cautiously. Inside was a polite, contrite woman. He sent on her way with a warning, her speed not "egregious," her license and registration coming up clean on the Mobile Data Computer (MDC).

Whizzing past Pryor on San Pablo Dam Road, driver number two kept going after he flashed his lights, forcing him to accelerate his pursuit. Once pulled over, she admitted to being so distracted she hadn't even heard the siren. The MDC spewed data in bright orange letters - enabling him see all he needed in the darkened interior. That driver received a citation for going 20 miles per hour over the speed limit.

During the evening's quiet moments, Pryor reflected on what police are seeing - increased Sleepy Hollow burglaries, a spike in crashes by teens and adults driving under the influence, and residents fleeing from police.

Case in point? As Pryor chatted with two juveniles he'd spotted ambling down Lombardy Lane around 1 a.m., one suddenly bolted. Leaving his dignity behind, the baggy-shorter sprinter unwittingly - and unnecessarily - placed

Don't Delay - Call 911:

California Business and Professions Code Section 25667. (a) Any person under the age of 21 years shall be immune from criminal prosecution under subdivision (a) of Section 25662 and subdivision (b) of Section 25658, where the person establishes all of the following:

(1) The underage person called 911 and reported that either himself or herself or another person was in need of medical assistance due to alcohol consumption.

(2) The underage person was the first person to make the 911 report.

(3) The underage person, who reported that another person was in need of medical assistance, remained on the scene with the other person until that medical assistance arrived and cooperated with medical assistance and law enforcement personnel on the scene.

(b) This section shall not provide immunity from criminal prosecution for any offense that involves activities made dangerous by the consumption of alcoholic beverages, including, but not limited to, a violation of Section 23103 of the Vehicle Code, as specified by Section 23103.5 of the Vehicle Code, or a violation of Sections 23152 and 23153 of the Vehicle Code.

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