

## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

### Parent must look for addiction warning signs

In response to the recent article, "Author opens dialogue for teen, college binge drinking" (Gazette, Feb. 23-March), I urge that parents stay vigilant to any sign of alcohol abuse. The reality is that underage drinking, young people ages 12 through 20, accounts for 20 percent of all alcohol consumed in the U.S. according to a report released by The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University (CASA). Author Zalcikas states that she went to parties when "parents were conveniently sleeping and oblivious to 300 drunk [sic] kids." This type of scenario is a recipe for disaster and unfortunately much too often we hear of the consequences and ramifications that are associated with it.

Apart from the referenced disturbing statistics, what is most disconcerting is what research has confirmed: teens have easy access to alcohol because parents are too often unwitting co-conspirators who see underage drinking as a rite of passage.

According to Zalcikas, "parents don't always have the education to make the right choices." Informed Families (IF) is working to ensure parents and teens do "have the education to make the right choices" and begin to take serious steps in accepting each other's responsibilities in the fight against drug, alcohol, and tobacco. If offers a course called "Talking to Your Kids about Alcohol Abuse and Begin to Establish a Clear Picture of Healthy Beliefs and Behaviors for Families." It also helps parents send appropriate messages to their children.

As a professional specializing in adolescent substance abuse issues, I encourage all parents to work with their children on forming healthy habits, plan family-oriented activities, and engage in lots of listening.

**MARINO E. CARBONELL**  
*Certified addiction specialist*  
*South Miami*