

Parents charged after hosting teen drinking party

By **Sarah Menesale**/ News Staff Writer
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WESTBOROUGH - The parents of a 2006 Westborough High graduate were charged yesterday with allowing underage drinking at their home during an August party for their daughter.

Police presented evidence for the charges against Carolyn C. Bjork and Karl Bjork of 6 Gale Meadow Way at a Westborough District Court hearing held by Assistant Clerk Magistrate Mary Anne Pozzessere

"I'm hoping people see this (example) and realize it's not acceptable behavior," said Police Chief Alan Gordon. "If we get enough evidence and can justify the complaint, we will bring parents who allow underage drinking to court."

The Bjorks could not be reached for comment, although they denied knowing alcohol was available at the party, according to an August police report.

On Aug. 22, at 11:10 p.m., as a result of a motor vehicle accident investigation, police went to the Bjork home to look into an alleged underage drinking party, police said in a press release yesterday.

Sgt. Peter Goodney and Officers Steven Tompkins and Richard Trainor saw vomit in the road in front of the home, as well as a number of empty beer cans and plastic cups along the side of the road.

The officers spoke to the Bjorks, who said their 18-year-old daughter had a party for 30 friends before heading off to college, police said. The parents told police the teens remained at the house during the party, which took place on a rear deck and in the back yard. They did not observe any alcohol being consumed, according to the report.

"Some parents view it as a right of passage. It's not," said Gordon in reference to parties before teens head off to college.

Westborough has been lucky to not experience tragedy from teen drinking, but the town is not immune from it, Gordon said.

"Teen drinking has always been around, but it really hit home with the incident of the Murphy sisters. That was in a neighboring community, but it can happen here," Gordon said.

He was referring to an alcohol-related accident in Northborough that killed sisters Shauna and Meghan Murphy on Oct. 13, 2005. "I don't want to see that happen here, and whatever steps I can take to insure that from happening we're going to do."

School Committee member Bruce Tretter agrees.

"This is exactly what we're trying to prevent by spreading awareness and taking action so this doesn't happen anymore," said Tretter, who is a member of the Home Safety Network, a network of parents of middle and high school children committed to helping children remain safe and substance free at home parties.

Tretter credits Gordon for sticking his neck out on such a sensitive subject.

"He's taken a lot of criticism, but I applaud him," Tretter said.

The Bjorks will be arraigned at a later date. Under the Massachusetts Social Host Law, providing alcohol to a minor is a crime, and it comes with the maximum penalty of imprisonment for six months and a fine of \$2,000.

The accident that led police to the Bjorks home in August occurred when a car driven by an 18-year-old man who was at the party collided with another vehicle at East Main and Haskell streets. The partygoer drove away, but was later found, police said.

If teens or parents become aware of an underage drinking party, Gordon advises them to call the Westborough Police Department Tip Line at 508-366-8580 or call the station anonymously at 508-366-3060, or even send in an anonymous letter.

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