

DeerfieldReview

Police charge Deerfield couple

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By **MARCIA SAGENDORPH** Staff Writer

When teenagers Danny Bell and Ross Trace were killed last October in a traffic accident that turned the spotlight on teen drinking and driving in Deerfield, they were heading back to a party at the home of a Deerfield couple.

On Friday, police charged Jeffrey and Sara Hutsell with five misdemeanors in connection with that party and the couple's actions during the police investigation after the crash.

The Hutsells turned themselves in to Deerfield police after warrants for their arrest had been issued, Deputy Chief Rick Wilk said.

Jeffrey A. Hutsell, 53, and his wife Sara, 52, were each charged with two counts of violating the Deerfield liquor control act; one count of endangering the health of a child; and two counts of attempting to obstruct justice.

"These are all Class A misdemeanors punishable by up to a year in jail, a \$2,500 fine, probation or a combination of those," said Daniel Shanes, chief of felony review for the Lake County State's Attorney's office.

"Based upon what the Hutsells did or did not do, these are the charges that applied to their conduct," Shanes said as to why the charges were misdemeanors and not felonies.

He said the first two charges related to failing to control a party at their home.

"The Hutsells were at home at the time," Shanes said. "They knew their son was having a party, and several dozen kids were coming and going from their home."

The charge of attempting to obstruct justice relates to how the Hutsells did not provide completely truthful information to local authorities after the incident, and attempted to cover up evidence of the party, Shanes said.

Charges were not issued sooner due to the scope of the investigation.

"This was an extremely detailed and thorough investigation conducted by the Deerfield Police Department and the Lake County State's Attorney's office," Shanes said.

"There were dozens of teenagers at this party, there were dozens of people involved in the police response, there were dozens of medical people involved in treating people after the accident," he explained.

Shanes said that these are the charges that are warranted based upon the investigation at this time, and that no others are currently expected.

The Hutsells posted the 10 percent of the \$50,000 bond, or \$5,000 a piece, for the warrants. They were given a court date of 9 a.m. Jan. 10 at the Lake County Courthouse, 18 N. County Street, Waukegan.

The accident occurred Oct. 13 on Summit Drive on the weekend of Deerfield High School's Homecoming events. Danny Bell, 18, of Bannockburn and Ross Trace, 18, of Riverwoods were killed.

Five teenagers in the car, including Bell, Trace and three who were treated and released after the accident, had all attended a party at the Hutsell's home at 775 Summit Drive, Wilk said. He confirmed that the teens had been at the party, had left and were returning to the Hutsell's when the accident happened.

"We hope that this sends out the message that it will not be condoned by parents to let kids party in the basement because they think it is safe," Wilk said.

He said that the arrests were the "result of the investigation," noting that local officers had spoken with a number of people involved but declined any further comment.

Deerfield Mayor Steve Harris said that the arrests are important.

"I think we are sending the appropriate message across Deerfield and the North Shore," said Harris. "That is, adults who are hosting parties where risky behavior such as underage drinking knowingly takes place should be held accountable.

"In my opinion, it is clearly the right result and it tracks accountability to the right people," Harris added. "Having said that, it is also important to note that the high school students who are involved in this activity also need to face severe consequences for their acts."

Families of the victims could not be reached for comment on Tuesday.

After the accident, community members, state and local officials and school representatives all joined together to try to address the problem of underage drinking.

Deerfield High School officials organized a community meeting, working with Harris and Highland Park Mayor Michael Belsky, to search for solutions. The Village of Deerfield donated a \$4,500 check to the schools for drinking prevention efforts, a result of fines from six local businesses that had served alcohol to underage customers.

<http://www.pioneerlocal.com/deerfield/news/188396,de-hutsellarrest-122806-s1.article>