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Secretary to DA  
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Dear Parents of Graduates,

Please let me be among the first to congratulate you and your graduate as he or she prepares to be honored as a member of the graduating class of 2015. The path toward graduation is a long and challenging journey and you should be extremely proud that your teenager has reached this momentous milestone. While such a significant achievement certainly deserves recognition and accolades, it is also essential to remember that graduation celebrations need to be held in a manner that is both safe and legal.

The purpose of this letter is to address some common issues and possible misconceptions about alcohol, the law, and teenagers. As I am sure you are aware, it is unlawful to host a party at which persons less than 21 years old are provided with alcohol. It is a crime to give or knowingly allow alcoholic beverages to be given to any person (not your own child) less than 21 years old. It is also a misconception that a parent may avoid prosecution by obtaining "permission or consent" from another parent to serve alcohol to the other parent's child.

In addition to the criminal penalties, serving even one alcoholic drink to an underage person places the host in a dangerous position where they may be held civilly liable for any accident or other consequence as a result of intoxication or impairment. Sadly, we are all too familiar with the tragic stories of fatalities, injuries and overdoses that have resulted from underage drinking. Please also remember, and remind your child, that the penalties for teenage driving while intoxicated, driving while impaired by alcohol and/or drugs, and texting are substantial and possibly life-changing. To put it simply, one night of festivities is not worth a lifetime of regret. Therefore, if you or your teenager are contemplating a graduation party involving underage persons and the presence or consumption of alcohol, I would respectfully recommend that you reconsider.

This time of year is cause for great celebration. The Yates County District Attorney's Office and the Yates Substance Abuse Coalition ([yatessac.weebly.com](http://yatessac.weebly.com)) want everyone to be safe, happy and healthy while they commemorate the accomplishments of our young adults. Thank you for taking the time to consider this information on these important issues. Congratulations and best of luck to you and your graduate.

Very truly yours,

Valerie G. Gardner  
Yates County District Attorney