



PLAY IT SAFE

Important decisions for ensuring a safe prom or other special occasion deserve a significant share of your party preparation time.



By Daniel Vocelle
2006-07 SADD National Student of the Year

As I look back at my high school experiences, I can say that my senior prom was one of my most memorable. I asked my high school sweetheart out and she said yes. But I wasn't thinking about just us in anticipation of that night. I wanted to be sure that all of my friends would have a good time – and get home safely.

There were going to be several after-prom parties going on that night – parties that would involve alcohol, strangers, and drugs ... and the possibility for everything to go wrong. I didn't want my friends to go to any of those parties, so I came up with a plan. I knew from being a part of SADD that prom night could be fun, special, and substance-free. I decided to throw a great party at my house, where adults would be there to supervise and where my friends could have fun and be safe.

It may surprise you, but the majority of American teens don't drink. When you or your friends feel pressured to drink because you feel that everyone is doing it, just remember when you say "No," you are not alone. SADD, Students Against Destructive Decisions, promotes peer-to-peer education and support. This prom season, thousands of SADD students like me nationwide will be encouraging their friends to make healthy and safe decisions. What about your friends? Will you make sure they are careful? It's up to you to stand up and tell your friends not to drink and to remind them to never get in the car with an impaired driver. Remember: it's up to you to be a powerful positive influence. Chances are your friends will listen.

The substance-free party I threw after the dance was a big hit. We had chocolate fountains, a catered buffet, and even a DJ. Some say that it was even better than the prom. The evening was perfect, and my friends and I will share those memories forever. Prom is a once-in-a-lifetime event – one that can and should be celebrated substance-free. Stay safe and look out for your friends, and you will create your own special memories on prom night. □

SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions), the national school-based peer-to-peer education and prevention organization, last July named Daniel Vocelle of Vero Beach, Florida, 2006-2007 SADD National Student of the Year. A graduate of Sebastian River High School, Vocelle served as president of his SADD chapter for the final two years. He was instrumental in staging mock DUI crashes and spreading SADD's "No Use" message. Under his leadership, his SADD chapter used footage from a mock crash to create a public service announcement, which was aired across the state as well as on MTV and VH1. "Daniel has been an exceptional spokesperson for SADD in Florida, working tirelessly to ensure that teens are fully aware of the perils of underage drinking and other drug use," said Penny Wells, president and executive director of SADD.