Dear Sir/Madam

I am writing you today in regards to the Public Law 2000 C.33 concerning possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages by underage persons called the “Private Property Ordinance”. As you may know, this ordinance has had a positive impact for 22 of the townships and boroughs in Morris County. It is my hope that this letter will answer any questions or concerns you may have regarding implementing it in your community. It is believed that when something is better understood people will become more comfortable with it.

That being said, the Community Coalition for a Safe and Healthy Morris (CCSHM) offers this Q & A ‘tip’ Sheet to help you get a clearer picture of the “Private Property Ordinance.”

Private Property Ordinance

Q: Will this ordinance violate privacy rights?

A: No, police must have probable cause before they enter private property, just as they would today. The ordinance would not change or violate any privacy rights. This ordinance would be in effect once police are already on the scene.

Q: Aren’t there laws already in place?

A: Serving alcohol to a minor without the permission or presence of a parent is already a disorderly person’s offense in the state of New Jersey. What would change under this ordinance is it would become a violation for youth to possess or consume alcohol on private property if their parent has not given permission and is not present.

Q: Will this ordinance tell me how to parent my own child?

A: No it will not. The ordinance would not change a parent’s authority over their own children. If a parent wants to provide alcohol to their young adult children, that certainly would be in their rights. This law is only concerned with youth obtaining alcohol without their parent’s permission or outside the presence of their parents. The private property ordinance also provides that other adults do not have the right to allow your child to drink on their property or give alcohol to your child. The ordinance would also help protect parents’ rights to expect that when their child goes to another adult’s home, they are safe from alcohol.

Q: Minors drinking on private property keeps them safe rather than drinking and driving, doesn’t it?

A: It is a common myth that this practice will keep them “safe.” More teens report bringing other substances to parties (i.e. prescribing drugs) that can lead to severe and life-threatening situations. Drinking on private property doesn’t keep them safe from injury, high-risk sex, poisoning, violence, suicide, etc. Over 2,000 young adults die each year due to alcohol-related injuries. Serving alcohol to minors is against New Jersey State law,
punishable by up to 6 months in jail and/or fines up to $1,000. Whether you agree or not, this is the New Jersey State law.

Q: How many Morris County towns have this type of ordinance?

23 other Morris County towns have adopted the ordinance.

Thank you for taking the time to consider the Private Property Ordinance. If you would like to discuss it further, please don’t hesitate to call.

Barbara Kauffman
Community Coalition for a Safe & Healthy Morris