

An Invitation to Illinois Schools

"7 Reasons to Leave the Party"

**A presentation of the Illinois Judges Association (IJA)
and the Hon. Mark A. Drummond**

Program Description

"7 Reasons to Leave the Party" is a 50-minute, award-winning program directed to teenagers with the goal to alter their perception about what's "cool" and ultimately save young lives. Conducted for several years in the 8th judicial circuit by Hon. Mark Drummond, of Quincy, the presentation shakes teenagers to their very core. The Illinois Judges Association (IJA), working with numerous members who have received training to deliver the program voluntarily, presents the program statewide, informing students about the legal and personal consequences of drinking and driving, taking drugs and having sex.

The Program

At the beginning, a hip-hop music track sets the tone of a typical teenage party. There is something unlawful going on in each room of the house. The presenter walks the teens through each room, and by using examples from actual court cases, gives them 7 reasons to leave that party.

Students are given a blank "contract" containing a pledge not to drink alcohol, not to drive with someone who has been drinking, and to promise that if they are at a place where they feel uncomfortable or unsafe, they will call the parent or guardian for a ride home, no questions asked. Both the teen and the parent or guardian are encouraged to sign the contract. The first 5 percent of teens at each school where the presentation takes place, who present a signed contract to their driver's education teacher or other school official, will receive a key chain flashlight, courtesy of the IJA – and more importantly, gain a new respect for the importance of lawful conduct and the role that the judicial system plays in it.

By the time these "party-goers" hit the courthouse, it is too late. The "7 Reasons" program is the judges' attempt at preventative law. It concedes that the people who have the most influence on teens are not judges but their peers. The goal is to give the majority who do not drink or do drugs the inspiration they need to convince their peers not to go down this road, thereby saving their friends from having a criminal record, losing their driver's license or even saving their friend's life. The presentation is blunt, visual and interactive.

Teen Comments

"It wasn't just a bunch of adults blowing smoke. This is what really happens."

"I liked the stories they told us. It really makes you realize that this stuff can happen to you, not just other people."

"I liked how interactive and energetic it was. I liked how honest it was."

The Logistics

Target audience:	6 th through 12 th graders
Timing:	Prior to Homecoming, Prom and other major school parties, mid mornings preferred.
Size:	Assembly or small-group setting. Size limited only by the size of screen available.
Equipment:	The presenter needs the following to be provided: a laptop with PowerPoint, a projector, a table, power strip, screen and microphone.
Arrival:	The presenter will arrive one hour early to set up.
History:	If a recent teen tragedy has occurred in the community, the judge would like to be informed in advance about whether he should address the tragedy.
Handouts:	A one-page handout for students will identify the 7 reasons to leave the party. The reverse side will contain a message to parents and the "contract." Schools will be encouraged to send the handout to parents.
Media/Guests:	With the school's permission, local community leaders, judges and media will be invited.

About the Illinois Judges Association. The IJA, with 1,100 members of active and retired judges, provides education and services to judges and the public. For more information, or to request this program in a school, contact: Maureen McClelland, Executive Director, Illinois Judges Association, 321 S. Plymouth Court, Chicago, IL 60604, or call (312) 431-1283 or (888) 431-1283, or log onto their web site at www.ija.org.