

# Prom can be dangerous for teens

By Col. Terry Maple  
*Kansas Highway Patrol*

Each spring as the school year draws to a close, high schools across the state begin preparing for their junior/senior proms and graduations.

While these events are usually met with great anticipation and excitement by school administrators, students, and parents, there is another dangerous reality that presents itself – underage drinking at parties to celebrate these occasions.

While schools do a great job of providing after-prom parties and activities as a safe alternative, too often some students will not attend the school sponsored party, and instead choose to attend alternative parties that provide alcohol. This creates a dangerous situation for our kids, and troopers, deputies and police officers know all too well the possibilities that exist.

Currently, schools across the state are holding safety demonstrations sponsored by Mothers Against Drunk Drivers, the National Save a Life Tour (a high-impact alcohol awareness program), and law enforcement, in which mock crashes are used to help students to un-

derstand the ramifications of driving while under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

These demonstrations are designed to make students think about the consequences of their actions, and understand that poor choices could cost them or someone else their life. These events can have lifelong consequences for everyone involved!

Law-enforcement officers across the state are aware of prom and graduation dates. They are often advised by citizens of illegal parties, and schedule extra enforcement when the parties are occurring. There have been occasions where parents or friends hold parties, thinking they will provide a safe environment for teens to party and drink alcohol. These are defined as “Social Hosting” under Kansas law, and are illegal. Violation of this law is a Class A misdemeanor, with a minimum fine of \$1,000.

Students, we encourage you to make responsible choices. Attend your school sponsored after-prom party, and resist peer pressure to consume alcohol or drugs.

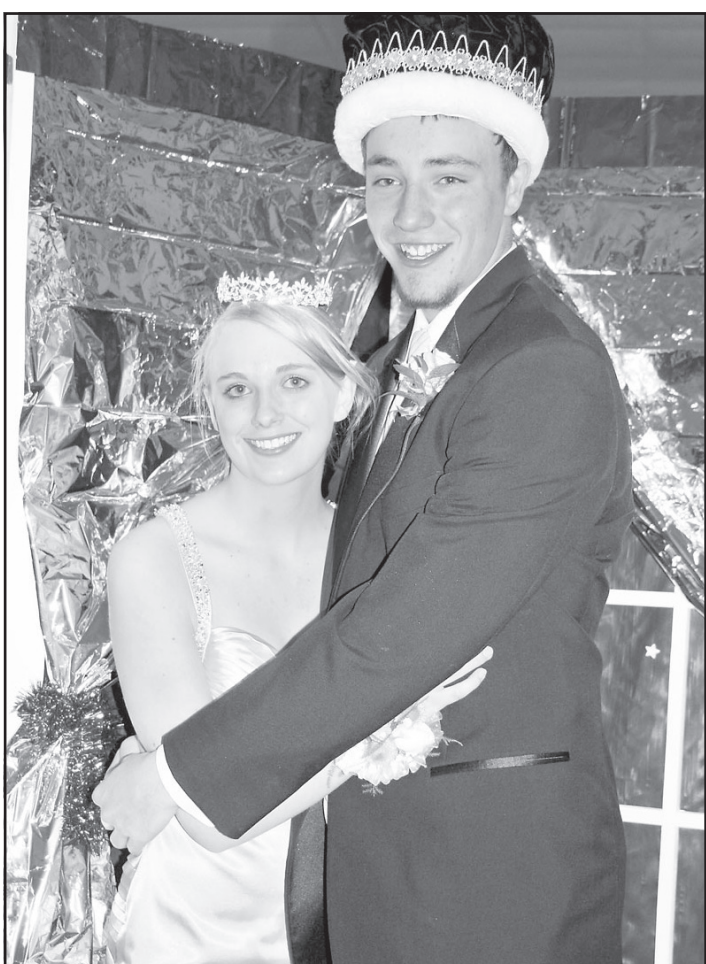
Think about your future. What type of career do you see for yourself? If you are convicted for drunk driving or drug violations, it becomes a part of your permanent record, and as

such, could automatically disqualify you from many professions. Worse yet, you could be involved in a life-altering or life-ending tragedy that will forever impact your memories of this very special time.

Parents, monitor your child’s activities. Ask the school to implement a notification policy if students leave prom or the after-prom party early. Check on your child. If they say they are going somewhere, check to see if they are actually there. (They may not like it now, but they will thank you later in life, and remember that lesson when they become parents.) Don’t become an enabler by hosting drinking parties. Not only are they illegal, but you could be held liable if someone gets hurt or suffers alcohol poisoning.

The Kansas Highway Patrol encourages everyone to celebrate in a safe and legal manner. Please buckle your safety belts as you travel, and avoid distractions in your vehicle that prevent you from giving your full time and attention to driving. Never drink and drive.

Prom season is a time of life-changing moments. Do your best to make good memories, not bad ones that will affect you and your families for the rest of your lives!



JUDY ROGERS/Golden Plains High School  
Golden Plains High School crowned its 2010 Prom royalty following the promenade April 17. Megan Zodrow was elected queen while Jordan Sprester was crowned king. Following the dinner, the couple started off the dance to the theme song, “You Take My Breath Away.” Students danced the night away before heading to the Colby Bowl for the after-prom party.

## Diplomat speaks at school after mistaken call

WEST ORANGE, N.J. (AP) – Talk about diplomacy.

The Zambian ambassador to the United Nations made a speech Wednesday at New Jersey’s West Orange High School to make amends for dialing the wrong

phone number.

In the fall, Ambassador Lazarous Kapambwe was trying to reach a diplomat from Sierra Leone. But the number he dialed was one digit off. He ended up calling Logan Svitzer, a student who was

sitting in his U.S. history class at the school.


His teacher, Robbin Sweeney, was so annoyed that she called the number and got the ambassador. She thought it was a prank – and spent 10 minutes on the phone

with him to verify who he was.

Kapambwe spoke at the school to make up for the inconvenience. He told students about Zambia and urged them to consider diplomatic service as a career.

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