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Put Yourself In The Way *By Bill Oliver*

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Bill Oliver is Executive Director of The Passage Group, which produces and distributes the Parent To Parent 2000 program nationwide.

Schools cannot RAISE children... Trained parents can! We Train Parents!

The evening started out as a young lady's "sweet sixteen" birthday party. There were about twenty kids invited but, as these things go, the event had grown to around ninety kids, many of whom were seriously drunk.

One of the guests phoned her brother at another party to complain that she had been "disrespected". Full of what one young man called "liquid courage", the brother and his friends loaded up into their cars and headed to the party to "kick some butt"!

When they arrived, the expected fight broke out in the front yard. Suddenly, a young man stood up with blood pouring from wounds in his stomach, his side, and his back. He had been stabbed...several times. He staggered into the house. The ambulance was called. On the way to the hospital, he died. Seventeen years old...dead...forever.

Another teen was charged with "murder in the first". He did not remember the fight because he was so drunk. Eventually, he was sentenced to twenty years in a state penitentiary. As tragic as that was, my stomach really knotted with the media interviewed the parents at the home where the "incident" occurred.

"What were you doing when all this was going on in your front yard?" asked the reporter.

"We were upstairs...trying to stay out of the way." came the reply.

One of a parent's primary jobs is to be "In The Way" as their children grow up. It is also one of the community's primary jobs. When either or both fail, we read about it in the paper...often in the Obituary Section.

Well, how can we constructively "get in the way"?

First, sit down with your child, look them in the eye and, in as few words as possible, draw a "line in the dirt" about alcohol and drug use...none, nada, zero, not any. Study after study, point out that parents are the most effective drug prevention, alcohol prevention, sex prevention program ever developed. Relatively few kids have gotten high, drunk, or pregnant with a parent watching.

Second, be awake when they come home. Meet them at the door...and let them know that you will be there waiting there for them. Give them an excuse to say no. "I would love to party with you guys, but I have a 'wacko' parent." Every child in America needs a "wacko" parent.

Third, show up. Let them know that you just might "appear" at their activities. When they are sixty, they will still be looking for you to come up that driveway...and will love you for having done it.

At this point, someone will usually ask, "Doesn't this mean that I don't trust my child?" The answer is "YES!" But that's the definition of a "child" isn't it? Someone not yet ready to be fully trusted. As the Good Book says, "Folly is bound up in the heart of a child." For their sake, get in the way...early and often.

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Gail Baker's Parent To Parent Resources

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