

PRESS RELEASE

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Circuit Judge Heinz Rudolf and Associate Circuit Judge Jeffrey Watson present to Lebanon Senior High School students:

‘7 Reasons to Leave the Party’

Imagine this. Every teenager in Illinois signs a “contract” with a parent or guardian, pledging 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.

That’s the hope behind a blunt, visual and interactive school program being presented by the Illinois Judges Association (IJA) called “7 Reasons to Leave the Party.”

The 50-minute, award-winning program provides students with information about the consequences of poor choices. The talk is peppered with true stories of teens who made wrong decisions and is designed to drive home this message: Encourage your friends to avoid wrong behavior, and you can prevent them from having a criminal record or losing their driver’s license. You may even save a life.

“Sadly, by the time a teen hits the courthouse, it is too late,” says **Chief Judge Andrew Gleeson**. We recognize most students want to do the right thing. Hopefully they’ll encourage their peers to do the same.”

The presentation opens with some hip-hop music track that sets the tone for a typical teenage house party. In the presentation, the judges identify the unlawful behavior going on in each room. **Judges Heinz Rudolf and Jeffrey Watson** walk the audience through the home, spelling out the 7 reasons to leave the party. They use visuals, including a breathalyzer and medical urinalysis container, to underscore the message. They provide the students examples of real criminal cases where students were formally charged with crimes with the violations demonstrated in the rooms. As is the goal, the judges will be bombarded with questions at the end. Students receive a one-page handout listing the 7 reasons to “leave the party.” The reserve side has a message to the parent/guardian, and schools will be encouraged to send the piece to them.

“Our main objective is to fully explain to students the REAL personal and legal consequences of drinking and driving, taking illegal and unprescribed drugs, and engaging in underage sex,” says **Circuit Judge Heinz Rudolf**. “We hope to make parents more aware of the judges’ attempt at preventative law. Many of the presentations are scheduled just prior to homecoming, prom and other popular party times during the school year concludes **Associate Circuit Judge Jeffrey Watson**.”

*The IJA, **Chief Judge Andrew Gleeson and Circuit Judge Heinz Rudolf** especially want to thank **Amy Venhaus** in coordinating with the Judges.