

Online, Thursday, February 11, 2010



SOUTH COUNTY INDEPENDENT

Serving Narragansett, South Kingstown,
Charlestown, Kingston, Wakefield and Peace Dale

Home

Local Headlines

Arts & Living

Six students arrested after drinking party

Classifieds \
Real Estate

By Liz Boardman/Independent Staff Writer

Sports

SOUTH KINGSTOWN — Six high school students, including at least two prominent athletes, have been charged after two underage drinking parties in recent weeks, and local leaders say that a tragedy could have resulted.

Neighbors

Neighbors called police on Saturday at 9:49 p.m., after they saw at least 25 cars parked at 88 Springdale Drive, Kingston, the home of Ira Gross, who they knew was out of town on vacation.

News: South Kingstown

News: Narragansett

As police approached, they heard someone yell, "Cops, run!" before more than 100 people fled into the surrounding woods.

News: South County

The underage party was one of three police have investigated in recent weeks.

Opinion

"This is a huge, huge problem in our community," said police Capt. Jeffrey Allen said. "It's a culture. They're watching [the MTV television show] 'Jersey Shore' and trying to live it."

Gallery

Special Sections

At Saturday night's party, Christopher Pizoli, 18, of 1009 South Road, Wakefield, the starting cornerback on the South Kingstown High School team, was charged with underage possession of alcohol, after he allegedly ran past a police officer with an open bottle of Olde English malt liquor in his hand. He initially told officers he was holding the bottle for a friend, but later admitted he had been drinking at the party, according to police reports.

About Us

Subscribe

Bridget Chappell, 18, of 40 Highland Ave., Wakefield, captain of the South Kingstown High School field hockey team, was charged with obstructing a police officer and resisting arrest, after she allegedly ran away from the police, then struggled as they tried to secure her in handcuffs. Police said she appeared to be highly intoxicated.

Place An Ad

Archives

Police released the names of the two 18-year-olds because they are legal adults and they will be tried in District Court. The others charged are minors who will be referred to Family Court and their names were withheld.

A 14-year-old male who was allegedly hosting the party was charged with underage possession of alcohol and a 17-year-old male was charged with underage possession of alcohol after he nearly struck a police cruiser with his car trying to leave the scene. Police said the boy and his passenger had an open, half-filled can of Narragansett Lager in the car, but the driver did not appear to be drunk. He told police he was driving a friend home.

A week before, South Kingstown Police had been called in to assist University of Rhode Island Police with an out-of-control party at 28 Upper College Road in Kingston, a home owned by James and Laura Nelson.

URI Police found more than 100 young adults at the party, and evidence of fights, marijuana use and underage drinking. In that case, the young adults also fled the scene, though the 17-year-old girl allegedly hosting the party was charged with underage possession, as was a 17-year-old boy who had allegedly refused to give any identification to a police officer.

Meanwhile, South Kingstown Police worked with Narragansett Police after receiving information on the anonymous tip line about an underage drinking party at the Holiday Inn on Jan. 15.

A parent called police after finding pictures of the party – where drugs and alcohol were being used – on her daughter's Facebook page.

Narragansett Police charged John Braun, 40, of 107 Bonnet Shores Road, Narragansett, with procuring alcohol for a minor. They allege he rented the hotel room for the party and purchased the alcohol.

South Kingstown High School Athletic Director Terry Lynch and Principal Robert

McCarthy declined to discuss the cases because juveniles were involved.

Allen said police are actively investigating who purchased the alcohol for the Kingston parties and hope to bring procurement charges. But the procurement laws – called the social host laws – only apply to people 21 or older, Allen said. So if a minor used a fake ID to purchase the alcohol for the party, he could not be charged with procurement.

But underage drinking was not the only thing that concerned local police at Saturday's party. At 11:07 p.m., they received a 911 call reporting that a teenaged girl was lost in the woods at the end of Ledgewood Drive. They found her at 11:21 p.m., allegedly intoxicated and suffering from a broken wrist.

"It was 12 degrees outside," said Lt. Paul Horoho, a police officer who sits on the school's Access to Excellence Committee as a private citizen. "She could have fallen and hit her head, not her wrist, and a drunk kid isn't going to survive 12 degrees overnight."

In addition, police confirmed they found foul language and racial slurs written in duct tape across the kitchen of the Gross home and said they are concerned about comments students have since made on their Facebook walls. A scan of the status updates on the Facebook walls of South Kingstown High School students included things like, "F-ing SK cops couldn't catch me," "Running from the cops ain't easy" and "The cops act like it's their job to break up our parties." Horoho said conversations with students have elicited responses like, "This is what we do. You'll never stop it."

"It is hard to be a kid these days," Horoho said. "Academics are tougher, and there is more demand on them athletically. It is a lot of work, and they have a lot of stress, and some don't have families that allow for other outlets, so they turn to alcohol."

In recent months, the School Committee has been reviewing a strict substance abuse policy for student athletes. The program, called Access to Excellence (A2E), targets student athletes not only because they are considered student leaders, but because statistics show they are more likely to be drinking and using drugs.

The policy would sanction student athletes for using illegal substances, or being in the presence of it, every day of the year, not just during the school year.

Some, like Horoho, who is helping to craft the policy, say that getting tough year-round is the only way to change the student culture. If the policy were in place, he said, it would give youths a way to refuse to go to parties like this.

"Kids are not curing cancer at a keg party," said Horoho. "They don't need to be there."

Some parents and School Committee members have expressed concern that the policy is over-reaching and does not offer enough ways for a student to earn their way back after a mistake. But police, other parents and at least one School Committee member want the School Committee to adopt it soon.

"We as a School Committee have obligations, as soon as we possibly can, to have a draft of this policy," Richard Angeli Jr. said at Tuesday night's School Committee meeting. "We have to educate and make people aware of the underage drinking and drug use. We are fortunate things ended in arrests, not in tragic circumstances."

But others on the committee call for restraint.

"We want to be careful and not capitalize on misfortune," said School Committee Chairman Anthony Mega. "We are going to get back to the issue of A2E, but we do not want to create a policy that is lawfully inept."

But Mega said that even without A2E in place, the school and the coaches could still take action.

"Coaches can discipline outside of policy, it is done all the time," Mega said. "If a coach says you're not playing because you are not representing sportsmanship, they can do that."

"I assume coaches will deal with it exactly as they have in the past," said S. Scott Mueller, School Committee member.

But Mueller – who has vocally opposed some elements of A2E – said his concerns about the policy remain.

"There are issues everywhere with students consuming alcohol, student athletes and students not playing sports," Mueller said. "Under A2E, if a member of student government was [at one of these parties], it would have no impact on them. Athletes are only one kind of leader at the school, and we should be concerned about all students."

"A2E is the first step, the smallest step," Horoho said. "We have to turn the tides."

Horoho said research shows the part of the brain that governs judgment develops after high school.

"The teenage brain is incapable of making good decisions," Horoho said. "With babies,

we hold their hands and boil their binks, but at 14 or 15, we treat them like adults. We need to show them respect, help them out, but we can't let them make their own decisions."

[Print this story](#)

[Email this story](#)

[Return to local index](#)

Reader Comments

The following are comments from the readers. In no way do they represent the view of scindependent.com.

Submit a Comment

We encourage your feedback and dialog, all comments will be reviewed by our Web staff before appearing on the Web site.

Name:

Email:

(optional)

Comments:

Image Verification: (Case sensitive)



Post Comment

[[Home](#)] [[Arts & Living](#)] [[Classifieds](#)] [[Sports](#)] [[Neighbors](#)] [[South Kingstown](#)] [[Narragansett](#)] [[Charlestown](#)] [[South County](#)] [[Opinion](#)] [[Gallery](#)] [[Special Sections](#)] [[About Us](#)] [[Subscribe](#)] [[Place An Ad](#)] [[Archives](#)]

Copyright © 2010 South County Independent. All Rights Reserved.