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Outrage grows as rave approaches

Prevention experts feel stronger laws are needed to protect youth.

During an emergency meeting held last Friday, the Redlands City Council agreed to initiate litigation against Pharaoh's Lost Kingdom Theme and Water Park. It also decided to pursue revocation of the conditional use permit that has allowed the defunct family theme park to host raves attended by thousands of youth.

Councilman Pete Aguilar told his fellow council members he went on a ride-along with police during a recent rave and observed objectionable behavior.

"We are looking for (recreational) outlets for young people but we have an obligation to look out for the safety of this community," said Aguilar.

This came as good news to Paul Mupo of Yucaipa, whose 14-year old daughter was one of two who went missing from a February 14 rave at Pharaoh's.

Mupo's daughter and her friend from Highland eventually turned up two days later at a Home Depot in Beaumont recovering from an Ecstasy binge and no recollection of what happened after they left the rave.

Mupo previously told the council what he observed at Pharaoh's when he tried to locate his daughter during a rave. "There were girls in their underwear, kids smoking and getting high and loud, thumping music," said Mupo. "My mouth opened so wide, it could have fallen on the floor."

A rave scheduled for this Saturday dubbed, "The Second Annual 420 Festival," has been promoted at various Internet websites as, "The biggest So Cal celebration of electronic and chronic culture."

Raves are all night dance parties commonly associated with drug use, especially Ecstasy. However, in this case, the use of "420" and "chronic", both slang terms for Marijuana, appears to endorse the use of the illegal drug by attendees, many of whom are minors.



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Candace Wilkie, a senior at Redlands East Valley High School recognizes the dangers such events pose and states, "Rave's draw teens and young adults to use drugs and alcohol, which is physically and mentally harmful to the users and may result in violence. These factors being in our community are not only dangerous to the teens and young adults involved but also to the innocent members of our community,"

Tickets for the April 18 event are available at outlets in San Bernardino, Riverside, Los Angeles and Orange Counties causing attendance estimates to range between 8,000 and 10,000.

Redlands Police Chief Jim Bueermann has expressed concerns not only about the safety of such events but also their appropriateness. "These events are inconsistent with the values of this community."

Despite the health and safety risks these events pose for participants and surrounding residents, they continue to take place because they are held on private property and promoters, obtaining the required permits, are within their legal rights to hold them.

Prevention specialists throughout the County of San Bernardino believe stronger regulations are needed to control these kinds of events.

Wilkie concurs, "Raves have been banned from other surrounding cities due to violence such as riots, so why would we want this bad influence in our community?"

The cities of Corona and Norco have recently adopted what's known as a Social Host Ordinance to address this issue. Moreno Valley officials are reviewing a similar ordinance.

These kinds of laws hold property owners accountable for gatherings and events that take place on their private property. They give law enforcement officials another tool to deal with the negative and harmful impacts resulting from underage drug and alcohol use.