

# Small group at JCHS for talk on teens, booze

By **BOB WATSON**  
News Tribune

Students who get a criminal conviction often face trouble for the rest of their lives, Cole County Prosecutor Bill Tackett told a small group of Jefferson City High School students and parents Tuesday night.

So, he's moving forward with his program to help teens avoid a first-time "minor-in-possession" conviction, and at the same time learn about the legal problems they could face if they're convicted of a crime.

A criminal conviction stays on your record throughout life, Tackett said during a presentation in the high school's cafeteria, during Parent-Teacher Conference night.

"You do not get student loans," he said.

See **TEENS**, page 5



Cole County Prosecutor Bill Tackett discusses the alcohol with a small audience of parents and students at the Jefferson City High School Tuesday evening.

Stephen Brooks/News Tribune

## ★ Teens

### From page one

“You get eliminated from piles of jobs,” because employers don’t have time to sort out whether the conviction was just the result of a youthful mistake.

His program takes advantage of the “window of time before you’re 18, and treated like other adults,” Tackett noted. “When you’re 18, you get to call your own shots, but then there’s no deferred prosecution.”

Under Tackett’s program, developed earlier this year with the help of a parents’ advisory group, teens facing a minor-in-possession charge can have that charge dropped if they successfully complete a program that includes attending two nights of classes and listening to a Victims’ Impact program presented by people whose lives have been disrupted by alcohol-related accidents or crimes.

“Parents have to go with you to the classes,” Tackett said.

Since starting his program this year, he said, “We have had 32 parents go through (it). You’ve got a community of parents who don’t want more teens drinking” and

getting in trouble.

His program also offers a free drug test to any parent seeking information about a child’s possible drug use, with no questions asked.

“There’s total immunity,” he said. “I’m not going to prosecute” on the basis of the test’s results.

But, he said later, so far no parent has taken advantage of that offer.

A third part of his program involves asking courts to order an ignition interlock for anyone who’s “unlucky enough to get a DWI and blows 1.6 or higher — which is twice the legal limit.”

Missouri law defines intoxication as a .08 blood-alcohol content.

Tackett said he’s already explained his program to “over 5,000 people,” including athletes and their parents at all five high schools in Cole County.

“It’s never been done before, in any county,” he said. “I don’t know if this will work” in the long run.

But, he added, “There has been quite a hunger in the community” for a program that will encourage

teens to avoid alcohol abuses, especially among parents.

Only one question was raised during the 20-minute meeting, when a parent asked what happens to a student who goes through the program, then gets caught a second time.

“All bets are off,” Tackett said. “We’ll bring back the original minor-in-possession, charge it and then charge the new one.

“You’ll have two convictions.”  
*bwatson@newstribune.com*