

Parents' charges mostly dropped

BY ELLEN BILTZ | Posted: Wednesday, July 16, 2008 12:15 am

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The Caroline County parents charged earlier this year with providing alcohol to minors at their teenager's birthday party had most of their charges dismissed yesterday in a plea agreement.

James Stanley, 42, and Linda Stanley, 43, each pleaded guilty to one count of contributing to the delinquency of a minor in exchange for the 10 other counts of the same charge being dropped.

They each agreed to a six-month suspended jail sentence and 30 hours of community service as part of the plea in juvenile and domestic relations court, said Commonwealth's Attorney Tony Spencer.

He said there was no evidence that the couple provided alcohol to the teens partying in their home the night they were charged.

Stuart Sullivan, who represented the Stanleys, said the 11 teens, ages 15-17, who police found to have been drinking when they responded to the couple's home in April, consumed the alcohol without the Stanleys' knowledge.

He said the couple planned for their 15-year-old daughter to invite two or three friends over for an evening, so they went to Wal-Mart to pick up the Hannah Montana cake they had previously ordered.

When they returned home, Sullivan said, they found their house full of teenagers they didn't know were coming. Then, as they cut the cake and sang "Happy Birthday" to their daughter, they began to realize some of the unexpected partygoers had been drinking.

The Caroline County Sheriff's Office arrived soon after, Sullivan said.

Spencer said yesterday that while he can't verify every aspect of Sullivan's explanation, the facts surrounding it convinced him a plea agreement would be appropriate.

Both of the Stanleys still have six pending counts of providing alcohol to someone under 21 for the six partyers ages 18-20.

Spencer said that at the upcoming Sept. 12 trial for those charges, a similar plea agreement can be expected.

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