

Parent's Corner

By Gail Minger



This is the time of year parents and students alike are anxious about the new adventure they are about to experience: going off to college. It is an exciting time, a time of change. It is a time when parents worry about their son or daughter moving away from home. "Did I teach them what they need to know to live outside the protection of their familiar surroundings, their home? Did I prepare them for the many changes and responsibilities they are about to undertake? "

Life at college has its' undeniable stresses— doing well academically, getting your own meals, washing your own laundry, getting enough rest, managing your time, and, of course, making time for all of the social happenings on and around campus. Today parents and students are more aware and do ask more questions about safety. After the high profile campus shootings and campus assaults, there is good reason to worry.

There is another very important area to be concerned about and that is fire. Fire happens in college campus communities more than most parents and students realize. Candles left unattended, discarding smoking materials improperly, cooking fires, arson, and other fire hazards exist. Roughly 3300 structure fires occur on campus each year. Many times students are crammed in a small, cluttered living space with improper egress, disabled smoke detectors, no sprinkler systems. It is so important for parents and students to be aware of the fire dangers wherever their son or daughter reside while at college, I know, I lost my son Michael in an arson fire in his college dorm.

Please remember a few very simple, life long lessons. Make sure you know TWO ways out from the building. Make sure to LOOK UP and see that your smoke detector is working and it is best to choose a residence that is protected by a fire sprinkler system. It is like having a fireman in your residence, especially when you are sleeping.

Students: you must take responsibility for your own safety. No open flames, it can catch things on fire. Always check to make sure you turned the stove, iron, hot rollers, curling irons, and other appliances OFF. Make sure your exit ways are clear from clutter. If you know the risks and what to do about them, you will have a greater chance of surviving a fire, a better chance to make it to graduation.

Parents please take time to teach your child these important steps in protection and insist whenever possible that your child sleep in a sprinklered residence only.

Wishing you a safe and wonderful college experience.

-Gail

About Gail Minger

In 1998, Gail and John Minger's son, Michael, was killed in an arson fire at Murray State University where he was enrolled in the university's program for students with a learning disability. Since this tragedy, Gail has worked tirelessly to promote campus fire safety in Kentucky and across the nation. She was the force behind passage of the landmark Michael Minger Act in Kentucky and was awarded the Cleary Campus Safety Advocate Award for this work in 2000-2001. In addition, she was awarded the State of Kentucky Citizen Advocacy Award and made a Kentucky Colonel (as a resident of Florida) for her contribution towards getting all public universities in Kentucky equipped with automatic fire sprinklers.

Gail is a member of the Board of Directors of the Center for Campus Fire Safety, and an advocate for student safety and continues her legislative efforts in many states and on Capitol Hill. She served as the Chair of the Governor's Task Force on Campus Safety in 2007 (Kentucky) and is on the Board of Advisors for Security on Campus, Inc. She also serves on the Executive Board of Common Voices with National Fire Sprinkler Association.