

# TV station's school 'test' story was worth doing, despite lockdown

By WALTER JAEHNIG / In late February, NBC's "Today" show hired two teenage-looking actors (both aged 21 or older) and sent them to a liquor store in New Jersey. The actors loitered outside, asking customers entering the store to buy beer for them. All male customers refused, but several women took their money and purchased their six-packs. This was not a huge story and probably proved nothing. It did, however, stimulate discussion about the adult role in underaged drinking, especially when the "Today" staffers interviewed the president of Mothers Against Drunk Driving about the implication that women were more willing than men to provide teens with alcohol. Television newspeople love this kind of story – and, because of their visual dimension, can do it very well. But news stories that involve reporters as active participants in making the news also raise ethical questions, as can be seen by the controversy resulting from KSDK's investigation of security at five St. Louis-area schools.