

## Matthew Kato Memorial Scholarship Application

Brittany Goss

My name is Brittany Goss, and I am a senior at the high school. I am seventeen years old and, preparing to graduate to attend the University of Rochester in August.

As a young adult entering this stage in her life, I can fully understand the magnitude and severity of driving impaired, and the importance of not only avoiding that type of life-threatening situation, but expressing leadership so that I can protect my friends from making poor and dangerous decisions as well.

I am still relatively new to this district. I just transferred to Henrietta last year, and therefore did not have the opportunity to be acquainted with Matthew. However, this summer, just weeks before the start of term, my friend Molly died tragically in a car accident, resulting from drug/alcohol use when she and her friend decided to head home late one evening. Their car collided with a UPS truck in the middle of an otherwise clear intersection.

The question in cases such as these tends to be, "who is to blame?" Was it their own fault for behaving recklessly, or was it our fault for neglecting to do everything in our power to emphasize the devastation and disaster that can be caused by driving under the influence?

Though we cannot alter past events, we can be steadfast and diligent in our efforts to prevent these tragedies from being repeated. Perhaps the unit focusing on drugs and alcohol should be lengthened or prolonged, and really elaborated upon in our health classes.

For example, yes, we know that alcohol consumption is dangerous and that we should make wise decisions and consider the consequences of our behavior. But what most kids don't know is that the internal effects of alcohol happen instantaneously,

regardless whether one can "feel" the effects or not. Alcohol takes effect on our alertness, focus, reaction time, and attentiveness (although subtly at first) long before our brains have time to comprehend or realize it has, which is one of the main dangers of drinking.

Its so unfortunate, because in spite of the posters, news reports, and obituaries we read, sometimes it isn't until someone close to us is lost that kids heed the warnings that are designed to prevent tragedies from occurring in the first place. Just within the last few years it has happened twice in our district-first with Matt, and then with Molly. Maybe now we will learn to open our eyes and forget that illusion on immortality kids my age so often carry. Perhaps now, we will learn to make smarter, safer decisions and spare our families and friends some heartache. I know I have.