

As I'm sitting here beginning to write this letter, I can't express how crazy it is that this is in the memory of a friend who we lost this summer. I meant for this to be a thesis essay where I would just sit down and write about the task at hand. However due to the topic, I can't find myself doing that. I'll let my heart do the talking.

Drinking and driving goes above and beyond one of the worst and most irresponsible things that anyone could ever do. After you consume any amount of alcohol I can't understand why somebody finds it necessary to get in a car and drive. I spent my summer in a whirlwind of confusion asking myself these questions again and again.

As my summer started, so did the bad news. My friend got a call saying that her neighbor was in the hospital. I didn't know the victim all too well but I knew enough to be scared and worried for him and his family. We sat in that hospital for hours trying to get answers to questions that could not be explained. They told us that he had been drinking and he decided to go driving. Spending the hours in the hospital we were informed that our friend from school was also in the accident. She was in the passenger seat and on impact was ejected from the seat. She was placed in the emergency room for weeks on end because she was suffering from brain damage, the doctors weren't sure she was going to survive. After our return home from the hospital we sat at the scene of the accident for awhile contemplating what really just happened there not too long ago. The culprit of this accident was drinking, something that kids do to just fit in at the high school. Without really being able to grasp the severity of how much of a consequence that drinking alcohol can cause.

At the closing of the summer, where the new school year just lurked around the corner I received a phone call that told me a very good friend of mine had been killed by a drunk driver. The feelings that went through my body still terrify me to this day. I can remember exactly what was said and where I was because it's like as if it were in slow motion. Matt Kato was a friend who I admired for his humor, the way he carried himself and how he was able to make light of everything. Overall Matt was an amazing kid who didn't deserve any of this, nor did his family. No one does. A man, who was old enough to know the consequences behind getting in the car while being drunk, took this away from him. Most importantly this man took a son away from a loving family. When we were younger our parents told us never to talk to strangers. In this case someone's son was taken away from them by a stranger who made the worst decision of his life. How is this fair? To answer your question it's not fair. The first weeks of summer I visited a friend in the hospital who was drinking and driving which got him into an accident, the

last weeks I visited a friend who lost his best friend due to a drunk driver.

Do I see what the dangers of drunk driving are? Yes I do. Granted, I wish I didn't have to find out this way. I thought it was common sense for people, if you drink never think of driving. If people know what driving under any form of influence can do to you and they've witnessed the toll that the death of Matt Kato has played on everyone, then why are they're still people out there who choose to get behind a wheel and not be sober? Not only are they putting themselves at risk, but others lives are on the line as well. I don't care who you are because no one has the right to put an end to anyone's life. I think that this is the most unfair thing ever.

For possible solutions just continuing to do what you both are doing in memory of Matt you're fighting for justice and that's what you all deserve. We will do everything we can to help you. By trying to make the justice system understand what a severe impact this has made on the community. In a smaller scale I can help by making the choice to make sure no one I love and care about ever thinks about driving under and intoxication. If it means losing a friend because I take away their keys and won't let them drive due to being under any influence, then if that's what it takes I'm willing to do that. However I'm not willing at all to lose another friend because I wasn't brave enough to do tell them they shouldn't be driving. I'm going to try to do everything in my power not to let that happen again. I've talked to younger adults about the dangers of drinking and driving, to let them know what can happen at any age. A life is so precious and it can be taken away in an instant, people need to realize this and make wise decisions. As a result of a stranger's decision, I sit looking back at pictures of Matt and wishing he was here but he can't be. People cannot be replaced. Driving under the influence destroys lives and that's all there is to it.

I did not write this essay for the scholarship, I wrote it for the Kato's.