

Driving under the influence of any substance poses a danger on the roadways. This became evident with the accident that affected our entire community this past summer. On July 21, 2004 Matthew Kato was killed after being involved in an accident caused by a driver who was under the influence of alcohol. Matt did not do anything wrong, and yet his life was taken from him for no reason at all.

That is just one example of the dangers of drunk driving. Statistics show that 17,000 people are killed every year in this country due to drunken driving. This is obviously an enormous problem that won't be fixed by one suggestion, but maybe little things will make a difference. Anything to help this problem diminish should be taken into consideration. Imposing stiffer penalties would of course be a step forward in dealing with people who choose to drink and drive. It seems though that judges do not impose harsh enough penalties on drunken drivers. Another possible solution is to enforce more police road blocks. By catching people off guard police can have the upper hand in dealing with this problem. The main solution to this is just to get people to stop driving drunk. Having designated drivers, taxi cabs, and other means of transportation available would help. Basically promoting awareness of the problem and ways to fight it are among the best ways to combat this profound and troubling issue.

I never did realize how much of a problem this was until it hit home. We go through life thinking that something like this won't ever happen to a person

close to us, especially at our age. When I heard the news of Matt's death I was 3,000 miles away, and my only thoughts were of getting home as soon as possible. Once home, we all couldn't get a grip what had really happened; everyone was in shock that this could happen to one of us. This tragedy has definitely impacted my life, as well as that of many others. Losing a friend who I have known since the early years of my life is devastating, but I know it is far worse for his family left behind. Matt's death has taught us all a harsh but important life lesson. Matt's life will not go unnoticed; his death has helped increase the awareness of driving under the influence. He has added even more firepower in fighting this problem. In my eyes Matt didn't die without a fight; he may be gone but he has made us all much more aware of this danger and that is the first step in combating such a prevalent problem. I pay a tribute to my friend Kato and will honor his memory by being committed to this important issue.