

## **Drunk Driving Needs To Be Stopped**

Drunk driving is one of the most frequently committed violent crimes in America today. Drunk drivers kill thousands of people and injure even more each year. This is why the government has to step up and come up with effective ways to stop drunk driving from occurring. Although the government has passed some laws and has gotten the number of deaths caused by drunk driving to decrease since 1982, there is still a lot more that has to be done.

The number of deaths and injuries caused by drunk drivers today is still in no way acceptable. I don't think any number of deaths caused by a careless person that gets behind a wheel while drunk (or on drugs) is acceptable. Even if the number of deaths caused by drunk drivers decreases to one person per year, that would still be one person too many. That one person would have belonged to someone who loves them and he would have had many dear friends who love him and miss him every single day. And they would wonder why that accident happened when it could have so easily been prevented. That one drunk driver causing that one death causes so much pain to so many people not to mention the life he took away. That one life meant so much too so many and he still had a full life ahead of him. He could have been a teacher, or the president or just a regular guy with a family. But because of that drunk driver's carelessness we will never know what he would have turned into. And to make matters worse that drunk driver won't receive steep enough penalties and he will most likely drive drunk again. It seems like a big nightmare right? Well this happens every single day, and about 17000 times a year. That's right, about 17,000 people are killed each year and about half a million are injured each year by a drunk driver. That's about one person being injured every two minutes and about one person being killed every 30 minutes! I have printed out a chart that shows the number of deaths caused by drunk drivers from 1982 through 2003. The chart shows how the numbers of deaths have decreased each year, but there is still a lot more that has to be done.

The government has passed a few good laws, such as the legal drinking age being 21 instead of 18 and the decreasing of the BAC from .10 to .08. Laws like these have decreased the amount of accidents caused by drunk drivers. I think along with these prevention laws, there needs to be a change in the amount of penalties drunk drivers receive. This is especially true for the first offense. The fact is that drunk driving has to be stopped! There are too many lives being taken away or changed forever when they don't have to be. Driving drunk is a choice that causes great risks to the drunk driver and everyone else on the road. If someone chooses to take that risk then they need to have steep consequences. The steeper consequences should not wait till they have more than one offense; they need to learn the first time that drunk driving is a serious crime. This is not going to happen if first offenders just get what are considered lesser penalties, like their license taken away for a few months, community service or few fines. This is like getting a slap on the wrist; it won't teach them the lesson that needs to be taught. This lesson shouldn't have to wait and be learned until a drunk driver's third offense, or until they kill someone. The penalties need to be increased enough so that it scares people from getting behind the wheel drunk.

The penalties increase should start at the first offense and increase from there. If someone is caught driving drunk for the first time that doesn't result in an accident with someone getting injured or killed should receive at least 60 days in prison and a fine of at least 600 to 2,000 dollars. After they get out they should have an assessment done, giving them a period of how long they have to go to treatment and what treatment they have to get. They

should have at least 18 months of outside patient treatment unless assessment assigns more. They will have to find a ride to work and treatment because they should have absolutely no driving permitted to them for at least 6 months after released from prison, while their car or cars are immobilized or impounded for that time. After absolutely no driving for at least 6 months they should get a work and treatment license only, meaning they can only drive to work and treatment meetings. They may only drive to work and to treatment if they are able to start their car. This could only happen if they are able to pass a breathalyzer test because an ignition interlock system will have to be installed into their cars. They will have their work and treatment license for at least 6 months, giving them a full but monitoring license after a total of at least 12 months. During and after these 12 months or more they will have to wear a monitoring ankle bracelet to make aware of where they are going and if they are only driving their car with the ignition interlock system installed. After their 18 months of treatment or longer they will have to continue to wear the ankle bracelet for at least 6 more months, having to meet with a probation officer once a month. Making them have steeper penalties for first offense will hopefully make them not want to ever drive drunk again, knowing if they do they will have to go through even steeper penalties for any other offense. These are just the penalties for the first time offender, if the drunk driver continues to drive drunk then they should receive steeper penalties for each preceding offense. Also the penalties should be steeper if the drunk driver causes injuries to another person, and if a drunk driver causes a death to someone they should receive a murder charge along with the steeper penalties for when and if they get out of prison.

Along with the penalties being increased on all offenses there needs to be more law enforcement trying to catch these drunk drivers before it's too late. There also needs to be more media awareness about the dangers of drunk driving and the awareness of the penalties that come along with driving drunk. I also like the idea of Bill A00901 that is being proposed. This Bill proposes a state wide toll free hotline that is run by police to stop drunk driving. This hotline is where people can call to report a case of drunk driving. If the call results in a conviction of a drunk driver the person who called will receive an award. A pro for this Bill is that it rewards people for reporting drunk driving, making more people want to call cases in. This is also a good idea because there are millions of people that drive drunk and don't get caught until it's too late, this bill can help stop that from happening.

One idea that was thrown up in the air to make people think twice before getting behind a wheel drunk was a car magnet. There is already a heart magnet that says "STOP DWI Sober Means Smart" and I have seen an increase of these everyday. That means people are becoming more aware and are trying to get the point out by putting a magnet on their car. I think that we could do more than just making a magnet. I think that if we made a magnet with an anti-drunk driving slogan but also added a website on to the magnet. We would first have to make a website before we made the magnets but I think it would be a good way to inform people about the dangers and affects of driving drunk. The website should have facts about drunk driving and ways that people can get involved in stopping drunk driving. This website could get people involved in having new laws passed and could also raise money for MADD. The website could sell the magnets for a minimum of one dollar but people could buy it for any amount knowing that the money will go towards MADD. I think the web site should be called MattKares.com and we could put Matt Kares on the magnet also. (I have attached a design for the magnet in the back). I also think this website should be in memory of Matt and other victims of drunk driving. People can add their loved ones name to the website and write something about them. I really believe that this website could inform a lot of people about the dangers of drunk driving. I think

the magnets could travel far by selling the magnets on the website.

Over all there is just a lot more that has to be done to stop these drunk drivers ITom killing and injuring are loved ones. To many innocent peoples life's are being taken away or seriously changed because of these drunk drivers and they need to be stopped. Unfortunately I have personally been affected by a person's carelessness to get behind a wheel drunk. I was emotionally affected by my friend's death on July 21st 2004. I became unhappy and depressed because I felt guilty for being able to smile and laugh so most of the time I didn't. I shut down and isolated myself from people because I was confused (and still am). I am confused about life and what it means, I am confused about what happened and why and I hurt. The pain inside me just never went a way, but I am getting better. I have come to terms with the help of my mends that it is ok to smile and laugh because that's what he would want me to do, and that's what he always made me do. His smile could make anyone smile and his laugh... (O I miss his laugh) that could make anyone laugh. Although the pain is still there I have been able to smile and laugh more but it is still hard at times. I think about him every single day, and I always will. I will always be grateful for what he has taught me in my life and ill never forget him. His life has affected me in more way than I can explain. He has shown me that life is precious and it is important to try and live every moment as it is your last, to not regret anything and just to live your life to the fullest; because you just never know what life will bring you. He has shown me that it is important to smile as much as possible and to laugh even more. I am truly blessed to have known him for the short time he was here. He is truly an angle and amazing person that will be missed forever and always will be remembered. Although I have learned a lot from his life I would much rather have him here today. I know that this can not happen, so I think that we have to do all that we can to stop as many drunk drivers as possible!