

Please Stop Killing the Innocents

Today this column is dedicated to the memory of innocent lives who are killed on our streets each year due to drunk driving. Ironically, the ones who are drunk may never get hurt but the victims are often passengers in cars or street pedestrians. We see road signs or billboards on the streets promoting that after a party there should be a designated driver behind the wheel. This means that there should be at least one person who will not drink any kind of alcoholic beverage because he or she is going to be the driver for the night. This suggests that any amount of alcohol consumed, no matter the small the amount, can impact critical reflex actions needed when driving. One need not be drunk to prove that alcohol can impact judgment or fine muscular motor skills.

Unfortunately, the "designated driver" at parties too often becomes the "designated drinker." He/she might only drink one can of beer and that small amount can impair judgment.

Since data is not available in our country, I need to quote USA facts about alcohol and driving. "In all 50 states, the legal limit for drunk driving is a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) level of .08. A 120-pound woman can reach a .08 BAC level after only two drinks and a 180-pound man can be at .08 after only four drinks. A "drink" is either one shot of liquor, a five-ounce glass of wine or one beer, all of which contain the same amount of alcohol. At a .08 BAC level, drivers are so impaired that they are 11 times more likely to have a single-vehicle crash than drivers with no alcohol in their system. But 25 years of research has shown that some impairment begins for both males and females even after one drink." (*Ask About.com*)

Early in morning, while these fun-crazed drinkers are driving home at high speeds, a tree walks into the pathway of the car or a wall meanders in front of the vehicle preventing the vehicle from going any further. There is a loud bang. It is a serious crash. Broken bones, blood-stained streets and outbursts of screams and tears. Help! Help! But it's too late. Someone is dead.

NEW LAWS NEEDED

Is the culprit Mr. Alcohol or is it the refusal to make wise choices? Young people often think of themselves as invisible. They are adventurous, impulsive, and can often be down-right foolish with their decisions. They think that such tragedy will never happen to them. Yes, we do need stiffer laws and penalties for accidents due to drunk driving. We might also need stiffer laws controlling the consumption or purchasing of alcohol to persons under the age of thirty. Why this age? Many of the drunk drivers are teenagers or young adults. In addition, the government can require owners of vehicles to install speed governors or speed limiters (a device used to measure and regulate the speed of vehicles or engines). This would mean that no automobile can travel more than a certain speed (45 MPH) as designated by law because the "speed limiter" will actually prevent it from doing so. These "speed limiters" can be a part of the vehicular inspection each year. The government should also ban alcohol on all public transportation and if a bus driver is found with any amount of alcohol in his or her blood during driving, he or she should be seriously fined and prevented from driving a public transport for life. Police should do random tests of bus drivers with the use of a breathalyzer (a device for estimating blood alcohol content (BAC) from a breath sample).

It is imperative that we stop allowing Mr. Alcohol to take front stage. We need common sense to be the drivers behind the wheels. No wonder there is a saying that common sense is not so common anymore. We need to stop letting this mind and behavior-altering liquid (alcohol) from poisoning our thoughts and hearts. Too many are dying on our streets. Too many relationships and homes and falling apart because of alcohol.

Several years ago, I presented the following poem to remind our readers of the danger of alcohol and how the innocents suffer. Once again I reprint this poem in memory of so many innocent persons who have died since the year began due to someone else's drunken driving. Read and share.

I Didn't Drink And Drive, So Why Am I the One to Die?

I went to the party, Mom, I remembered what you said.
You told me not to drink, Mom, so I drank soda instead.
I really felt proud inside, Mom, the way you said I would.
I didn't drink and drive, Mom, even though the others said I should.
I know I did the right thing, Mom, I know you are always right.

Now the party is finally ending, Mom, as everyone is driving out of sight.
As I got into my car, Mom, I knew I'd get home in one piece.
Because of the way you raised me, so responsible and sweet.
I started to drive away, Mom, but as I pulled out into the road,
The other car didn't see me, Mom, and hit me like a load.
As I lay there on the pavement, Mom, I hear the policeman say,
The other guy is drunk, Mom, and now I'm the one who will pay.

I'm lying here dying, Mom, I wish you'd get here soon.
How could this happen to me, Mom? My life just burst like a balloon.
There is blood all around me, Mom, and most of it is mine.
I hear the medic say, Mom, I'll die in a short time.
I just wanted to tell you, Mom, I swear I didn't drink.
It was the others, Mom. That other didn't think.

He was probably at the same party as I.
The only difference is, he drank and I will die.
Why do people drink, Mom? It can ruin your whole life.
I'm feeling sharp pains now. Pains just like a knife.
The guy who hit me is walking, Mom, and I don't think it's fair.
I'm lying here dying and all he can do is stare.

Tell my brother not to cry, Mom. Tell Daddy to be brave.
And when I pass away, Mom, put "Daddy's Girl" on my grave.
Someone should have told him, Mom, not to drink and drive.
If only they had told him, Mom, I would still be alive.
My breath is getting short, Mom, I'm becoming very scared.

Please don't cry for me, Mom. When I needed you, you were always here.
I have one last question, Mom, before I say good bye.
I didn't drink and drive, so why am I the one to die?

Dear reader, during this Christmas season please do not drink. If you must drink, do not mix driving with it.
Have a designated driver always. Please stop the killing. Please stop the drinking and driving. Please stop the drinking.

Barrington H. Brennen is a marriage and family therapist and board certified clinical psychotherapist, USA. Send your questions or comments to barringtonbrennen@gmail.com or write to P.O. Box CB-13019, Nassau, The Bahamas, or visit www.soencouragement.org or call 242-327-1980 or 242-477-4002