

## **Thoughts for A Safe Holiday: *Taking Action to Reduce Impaired Driving Deaths***

No one plans to drive under the influence of drugs or alcohol yet 11,000 people die in the United States each year due to impaired driving. That's almost 30 deaths per day. December is National Impaired Driving Prevention Month and safe celebration at the holidays are an important opportunity to reduce the number of mothers, fathers, siblings, sons and daughters who are lost to their loved ones and friends. It's also a time for parents to model for their children how to stay safe and have a great time. If we're going to reduce these tragic deaths, every one of us needs to hit the re-set button on our behavior and actions when we're drinking.

If you are going to be drinking, don't plan on driving. Coffee isn't going to sober you up. Give your keys to someone else. Travel with a designated driver who will not be drinking at that party. Arrange a taxi or Uber car in advance, and have the numbers programmed in your cell phone. New Jersey participates in the National Directory of Designated Driver Services (<http://www.drinkinganddriving.org/designated-driver-services/default.aspx>) and there are several options in Essex County. You can even arrange for a car to pick you up and a second driver will drive your car home for you.

If you're a parent of a teen, make sure that your child understands that the consequences of driving with someone who has been drinking are far more serious than calling home and asking to be picked up. Teens need to know that asking for help isn't going to get them into trouble. Have a conversation about what they should do if they feel that someone shouldn't be driving or if they are at a party and they aren't comfortable with what is happening there.

As the host of a party there are some simple steps you can take to make sure that everyone both has a great time and gets home safely.

- Serve drinks and cocktails that don't use carbonated mixers, as alcohol in carbonated drinks is absorbed faster into the blood stream.
- Provide enough for people to eat so no one is drinking on an empty stomach; good food makes for a great party.
- Don't serve too many salty snacks, which may lead people to drink more.
- Offer non-alcoholic alternatives. Consider mixing a batch of a celebratory "mocktail" so that guests who are not drinking don't feel left out of the celebration.
- Pay attention to your guests. Encourage someone who has clearly had one drink too many to switch to something less alcoholic. Make sure that no one drives away under the influence.
- Make a plan to ensure your guests safety. Collect car keys at the beginning of the party. Try to know in advance how your guests will get home. Have phone numbers handy for taxis.

If any of these steps make you uncomfortable, or feel like people will be critical of you for being too conservative, just think about waking up the morning after a party to

discover that someone you celebrated with was involved in a fatal car crash on the way home.

### ***Additional resources***

#### **National Impaired Driving Prevention Month**

<http://youth.gov/feature-article/december-national-impaired-driving-prevention-month>

#### **National Directory of Designated Driver Services**

<http://www.drinkinganddriving.org/designated-driver-services/default.aspx>

#### **DrinkingandDriving.org**

<http://www.drinkinganddriving.org/>

#### **For college students and young adults**

*Party Smart: How to Stay Safe While You Have a Good Time*

<http://www.bewell-dowell.org/bewell/content.php?page=partysmart>

#### **Hosting Safe Celebrations**

<http://www.flhsmv.gov/safety-center/driving-safety/vacation-holiday-travel-tips/christmas-new-years-holidays/holiday-party-hosting/>

<http://blog.allstate.ca/safe-celebrations-tips-for-party-goers-and-social-hosts/>

#### **Great non-alcoholic cocktails:**

<http://www.buzzfeed.com/ailbhemalone/no-booze-no-problem#.spKxOVbLb>

<http://www.bonappetit.com/recipes/slideshow/nonalcoholic-cocktails>

<http://www.tasteandtellblog.com/50-mocktail-recipes/>