

An Issue of Influence...

December is Drunk and Drugged Driving Awareness Month

Drunk and drugged driving affects more than just the people driving under the influence. Driving under the influence is a decision to be influenced, by a chemical alteration in your brain and body. That influence puts oneself and others at risk. When injury or death result from someone being drunk or drugged driving a vehicle, the victims can be the drivers, their passengers, pedestrians, and other motorists. According to the DUI Foundation website, in 2006, approximately 17,600 people died in traffic crashes involving alcohol, accounting for more than 40% of all traffic deaths. The people killed in these accidents were of all ages, from all social circles, ethnicities, and all economic backgrounds. They were friends, classmates, sons and daughters, mothers and fathers, aunts and uncles. They were growing children, teenagers with hopes and dreams, and adults with families who were left behind to pick up the pieces. They were not just numbers.

As if the statistics of approximately 2 in 5 traffic deaths are related to alcohol consumption were not enough, alcohol is not the only drug that affects driving skills. In 2006, over 1.46 million drivers were arrested for driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Education stresses alcohol so much, people don't realize that even simple, over-the-counter decongestants can affect driving skills -- not to mention illegal drugs. Marijuana affects areas of the brain that control the body's movements, balance, coordination, memory, and judgment, as well as sensations. Prescription drugs can act on systems in the brain that could impair driving ability. In fact, many prescription drugs come with warnings against the operation of machinery—including motor vehicles—for a specified period of time after use. Whether used as directed or abused for recreational purposes or to escape the stresses of daily life, driving while under the influence of some prescription or over-the-counter drugs, is a dangerous activity.

On average, a first time drunk driving offender has driven drunk 87 times prior to being arrested according to a statistic on the Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD)

website. On average someone is killed by a drunk driver every 45 minutes. Driving when you are impaired by alcohol or drugs can cause you to react differently in a situation. When you drink or use a drug, even a prescribed or over-the-counter medication, you add a chemical into your body that reacts with your own chemical makeup to alter your body functions. Alcohol affects the body as soon as you drink it. Unlike foods, which require time for digestion, alcohol needs no digestion and is quickly absorbed. About 20 percent is absorbed directly across the walls of an empty stomach and can reach the brain within one minute. The remaining alcohol then finds its way to your liver to be processed. A normal liver, on average can break down the alcohol in one standard drink (a 12 oz beer, 4oz of wine or 1.5 oz of 40% alcohol) in one hour. This, however, is highly dependent on the weight, gender, and tolerance of the individual as well as how their liver is functioning. The remaining alcohol stays in the blood stream circulating to the heart and the brain, etc., until the liver is finally able to process it. Your awareness of the effects of alcohol in your system may hit you immediately or it may seem to take awhile, but the changes that occur are based on how much of the alcohol is continuing to circulate and can be identified in the following stages: Euphoria, Excitement, Confusion, Stupor, Coma and Death. The Euphoria stage brings about changes in judgment and coordination. The Excitement stage brings decreased reaction time and decreased senses along with further decrease to control one's coordination. The Confusion stage brings on problems with memory, sleepiness and increased emotion. The Stupor stage is the "getting sick" or "passing out" stage. It is the body's attempt of trying to remove toxins or the body's way of shutting down to protect itself from the damage of a high blood alcohol concentration. The Coma stage is complete unconsciousness and brings a decrease in heart rate, breathing,



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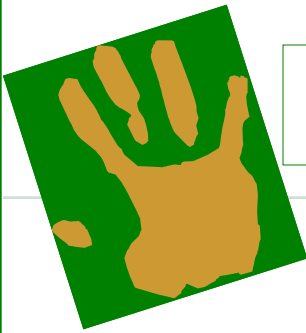
pulse and body temperature. The Coma stage is life threatening and can quickly move to a complete body system failure and the Death stage, which is self-explanatory.

As you can see, even in the first stage of drinking, your state of consciousness is already being altered. You may realize it, but many times you may not. Drinking coffee or an energy drink will help increase your "focus", but will continue to take your body and brain through the stages of impairment. The stimulant disguises the relaxation effect of the alcohol, but does not change the effects of each stage other than that. Eating might make you feel more sober by helping your stomach upset and keeping your blood sugar level from getting too low. But eating does not change the stages either, because the alcohol is absorbed first.

When you choose to drive while using alcohol or drugs, you choose to change your influence. It is no longer you who is in complete control of how you influence others. It is you under the influence of a chemical. This chemical may give you feelings of being happy and relaxed or confident and full of energy, but it also takes your away control. It changes your ability to control how you influence others and your ability to make choices. By drinking or using drugs and driving, you set an example...you influence.

Please take time this Christmas season to enjoy your life, your family and friends. If that includes drinking alcohol legally, please do it responsibly. Choose to use your influence to spread the Christmas Spirit of love and peace, not mark this time of year with tragedy and regret. *It is an Issue of Influence...*

For more information:
www.hubbardcountydrugfree.org



The Effects of Alcohol

If you have seen someone who has had too much to drink, you've probably noticed definite changes in that person's performance and behavior. The body responds to alcohol in stages, which correspond to an increase in blood alcohol concentration or BAC:

Euphoria (BAC = 0.03 to 0.12 percent)

They become more self-confident or daring.
 Their attention span shortens.
 They may look flushed.
 Their judgment is not as good -- they may say the first thought that comes to mind, rather than an appropriate comment for the given situation.
 They have trouble with fine movements, such as writing or signing their name.

Excitement (BAC = 0.09 to 0.25 percent)

They become sleepy.
 They have trouble understanding or remembering things (even recent events).
 They do not react to situations as quickly (if they spill a drink they may just stare at it).
 Their body movements are uncoordinated.
 They begin to lose their balance easily.
 Their vision becomes blurry.
 They may have trouble sensing things (hearing, tasting, feeling, etc.).

Confusion (BAC = 0.18 to 0.30 percent)

They are confused -- might not know where they are or what they are doing.
 They are dizzy and may stagger. They may be highly emotional -- aggressive, withdrawn or overly affectionate.
 They cannot see clearly.
 They are sleepy.
 They have slurred speech.
 They have uncoordinated movements (trouble catching an object thrown to them).
 They may not feel pain as readily as a sober person.

Stupor (BAC = 0.25 to 0.4 percent)

They can barely move at all.
 They cannot respond to stimuli.
 They cannot stand or walk.
 They may vomit.
 They may lapse in and out of consciousness.

Coma (BAC = 0.35 to 0.50 percent)

They are unconscious.
 Their reflexes are depressed (i.e. their pupils do not respond appropriately to changes in light).
 They feel cool (lower-than-normal body temperature).
 Their breathing is slower and more shallow.
 Their heart rate may slow.
 They may die.

Death (BAC more than 0.50 percent) - The person usually stops breathing and dies.

A Frequent Occurrence

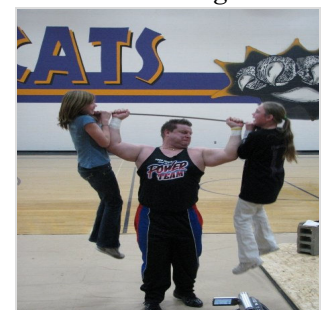
- About three in every ten Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash at some time in their lives.
- In 2002, surveys estimates that Americans took over 159 million alcohol-impaired driving trips,
- 12% of Hubbard County youth in 12th grade often ride in a car with someone who has been drinking alcohol per the Minnesota Student Survey.

Youth Event Calendar



Mondays at 5:30-7:00pm
 at the Laporte School in the
 FACS room.

Tuesdays at 4:00-5:30 pm
 at the HAPA/Taskforce office
 in the old Utke Hardware
 Building



Alternative Highs

Laporte:

Domination Dodge ball

Dec 4th: 7:30-11:30

@the Laporte School

Nevis 5th Quarters:

Dec. 11th Jan. 15th

& Feb. 19th

*To follow home games at
 Bethany Lutheran Church*