

# EDITORIAL

with Traci Gardner

## Be a responsible host

The holidays are a time to celebrate with friends, family and co-workers. Hosting a party can be as fun as the event itself, but every responsible host must know that it's only a great time if all your guests get home safely.

When throwing a party over the Christmas Season, or any time of year, as the host you have a social responsibility. That responsibility includes everything from planning the menu to ensuring that guests will not be drinking and driving when your party is over.

Bars that serve drinks for profit are regulated by laws that can determine how, where, and to whom drinks can be served. But, with private parties in people's homes guests are typically asked to bring their own alcohol, or it is sometimes provided by the host, which makes it much harder to have control over how much guests are drinking. As a social host, you should be concerned about how much alcohol your guests have consumed before getting behind the wheel.

The Canadian Safety Council recommends that when hosting a party, you plan appropriately by:

- Not drinking, or limiting your own alcohol intake to better monitor how much your guests are drinking.
- Know who you are inviting, and look for changes in behaviour to signal that a person is intoxicated.
- Serve lots of food with proteins and fat, and have lots of non-alcoholic choices. Avoid salty and sugary foods as that contributes to more alcohol consumption.
- See your guests to the door when they leave in order to assess their condition before allowing them to drive.
- If a guest is showing signs of being impaired, suggest that they give you their car keys and call them a cab or invite them to spend the night.
- Be prepared with a designated driver who can drive those guests home, who just cannot stay. Employers can plan ahead by providing a sign-up sheet for employees to volunteer to be sober transportation for office parties.
- If a person refuses to hand over their keys or spend the night, do not be afraid to call the police, it may seem harsh, but it is much better than the tragic consequences.

As a host or the homeowner, being sued for damages or injuries your guests might cause may be the last thing on your mind. But it is important to consider what can happen if a guest who drank too much is in a tragic collision. Even though the 'social host law' is still in the works, one thing is certainly clear, you could successfully be sued for injuries your guests cause - if you were proven negligent.

Whatever you do this season, however you celebrate, ensure that you and your guests will arrive home safe - please do not drink and drive!



**CHRIST IN CHRISTMAS:** James Raats from the Knights of Columbus presents a \$400 cheque to St. Joseph Catholic Elementary School students whose drawings illustrate how their families keep Christ in Christmas. Funds donated will go to the Halton Catholic Children's Education Fund. - Dawn Brown photo

## Family tree



By **Angela Tyler**

The one thing that is non-negotiable at Christmas is our tree. It has to be real. Sure we have a few ornamental fake trees here and there for ambience, however our family tree is a real tree and carefully picked.

Growing up, we always had a real tree. There were times when we just went to a tree lot to pick one out and other times we went out to cut ours down. I remember one year my dad calling up Mr. Nellis and asking if we could go on his property to cut down a tree which ended up with us up to our knees in snow, our dog somewhat lost and my dad trying to appease four women in the middle of a snow storm deciding which tree he should chop down.

That's what Christmas is all about...family time and memories. Now my own family history started around Christmas time so it has even more special meaning for me. I'm lucky to have a husband who, although may not be as into the Christmas decorating and the 24/7 Christmas music channel for the month of December, he too values having a real Christmas tree. The other thing he has come to understand is the same thing as my dad learned...it is the mom who really gets to pick which tree the family will have no matter if they cut down the

tree or go to a tree lot.

I'm the first to admit I am completely OCD/control freak about the tree. I like to pick it out. I like the lights to be clear. I have no use for tinsel or garland and most importantly I like the ornaments to be a well laid out plan and balance of old, new and kid made. It's partially a control issue, and I suppose more over I am a creature of habit.

Getting our tree was creature of habit time this year. We went to the Rotary lot as we always do even when it was the Kinsmen lot. We somehow always go there on a brutally cold day. I tell him I don't want a long needle tree and he begins to pull out trees for me to approve. I shrug, then suggest another. Too tall. Too sparse. Too short. I always find a million reasons why they aren't it and always go back to the very first one he picked out for me to look at. He puts up with my indecisiveness all the while knowing he picked the tree all along. This year the kids were old enough to pick up on my cues. I was suddenly pulled back to Mr. Nellis' forest where my mom, my sister and I were

ordering my dad about only this dad was being ordered about by me and Little J while her brother barked out "it's too fat...what about that one?"

Two days later after the tree had settled, me and the kids got to decorating it. I could barely contain them as they were just bursting to put decorations on and their enthusiasm continued as I started to hand them ornaments. Frankly enthusiasm is putting it mildly...it was like someone fed them gallons of caffeine and sugar. The decorations were unbalanced. The tree wobbled as they reached so high to put ornaments on it as they almost fell into the branches. A few ornaments fell and smashed. The red ones were basically all on one side and although they were having fun I could almost guess my fitbit heart rate monitor was probably ready to flat line from being so high.

Then the little guy turned to me with the biggest smile and said "This tree decorating is going pretty good, isn't it mom? Dad is going to love it!" I realized then that sometimes traditions have to change, and it was time for this mom to realize it's okay to have all the red ornaments on one side of the tree. It's going to be a great thing this year.



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