

Comment

The Canadian Champion

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When will they listen?

Each year at this time, Mother's Against Drunk Driving steps up its poignant anti-drinking and driving message.

And, each year at this time, Halton Regional Police Service and the OPP kick off their annual RIDE — Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere — campaigns.

We wonder if there will ever be a time when all drivers pay heed to the very simple refrain: If you drink, don't drive.

Toronto police this week are investigating the circumstances surrounding a horrifying accident that claimed the lives of three teens. Alcohol may have been a factor in the crash.

Another Christmas, another sad story of family and friends numb with grief.

While drunk driving fatalities occur throughout the year, the holiday period is the most dangerous for this type of accident. Too often at family get-togethers or other festive parties, alcohol is consumed in large quantities.

For those souls who don't know when they have reached their limit, it's up to friends and relatives to ensure they don't get behind the wheel of a car.

Pay for a cab, drive them home yourself or let them stay over. These are just a few

easy ways to prevent a tragedy.

"We need to involve everyone in the fight to stop impaired driving to ensure our roads are safe," says Jeff Gareau, president of the Halton/Peel Chapter of MADD. "This is a national tragedy in Canada and we need your help to end it."

Without a doubt MADD and the police have made inroads in reducing the number of incidents involving drunk drivers. But a slow decline isn't good enough.

We don't understand why anyone would play Russian roulette with their lives and the lives of others. And if we don't understand it, you can bet police and medical personnel don't either.

So that's why you will continue to see these random RIDE checks. To add a unique twist to the RIDE program, MADD and the police are teaming up to spread the anti-drinking and driving message. Tomorrow night and next Friday, MADD volunteers will join Halton Regional Police officers at the sobriety checkpoints. The OPP RIDE/MADD date is set for tonight.

If you happen to be stopped during the campaign, you may want to thank the police officers and MADD for placing a value on your life.

Our Readers Write

Racial comment at parade very offensive

Dear Editor:

My kids and I attended the Milton Santa Claus Parade. We were all looking forward to it because this was our first parade in Milton since moving here several months ago.

As we watched the groups pass and were all having a good time, a teenage girl in the crowd suddenly yelled out a racial comment to a passerby.

Then noticing me, the girl gave me a look of disgust.

I couldn't believe the ignorance and closed-mindedness of this person. I was stunned because not only

did I happen to be of the same culture she was insulting, but I also hadn't heard that word used in more than 20 years.

I'm angered that this girl would bring her prejudices out in a place where there are so many children. My four-year-old son overheard her comment and it upset me when he turned to me and said, "Mommy, what does that word mean?"

You'd think that this girl, who appeared to be about 17 years old, would behave better.

I hope that parents and schools try to put a stop to the spread of racism

and teach children to respect and accept all races. This should be taught early on in elementary schools and continue on through high schools.

So to the girl who made the comment, I hope you read this letter and understand how hurtful you were. Maybe with more education and awareness you'll overcome your prejudices toward other cultures, because it's so sad to see that someone so young carries such ignorance.

K. Chung
Milton

Make sure you include your name, address and telephone number when submitting a letter to the editor for publication.

There's lots to learn from the real Santa Claus

It's beginning to look — and sound — a lot like Christmas all over Milton.

Christmas lights. Carollers. Diet-forbidden foods. They're all a part of that so-called 'magic' of Christmas. Not to mention family and friends.

Here at the Champion office, it's clear that our Christmas spirit is in fine form. One of our reporters purchased three mini Christmas trees for our office. The other bought the ornaments to decorate them. And another decided Christmas just wasn't Christmas without advent calendars to mark the exciting countdown.

We even have our own Santa Claus of sorts, who was sneaking around and leaving chocolates in the stockings we've hung with care on our cubicle partitions.

To tell you the truth, I've never been a big fan of Santa Claus. Why celebrate a fat old guy who gives toys when I can celebrate God's son being

sent to earth in baby form — bringing with him the best gift of all, eternal life.

But something I read the other day made me warm up to Santa Claus. Although I knew the story of the jolly old fella had its roots in history, I didn't know the details. And, hey, if I didn't know the details, there are bound to be others also in the dark.

Santa Claus was actually a man named Nicholas, who was a bishop in Myra, which is now Turkey. Bishop Nicholas is believed to have been a wealthy man who devoted much of his life to helping others and was known for giving presents to poor children.

He reportedly died on December 6, around 330 A.D. — which came to mark the beginning of the medieval Christmas season.

His works were so well-remembered and the man so revered, that some countries adopted him



Around town

with STEPHANIE THIESSEN

as their patron saint.

When Dutch settlers came to the United States in the 1600s, they brought with them their saint, known to them as Sinter Nikolass. It was shortened to Sinter Klaas and, with common use — say Sinter Klaas five times fast — eventually became Santa Claus.

Over time, various authors and illustrators

transformed Santa Claus into the man who can be found at any mall near Christmas time — a softer, more approachable version.

Other tales of the origin of Santa Claus includes that of a wealthy little boy named Nicholas born in about 255 A.D.

According to the legend, his parents died when he was young, and he was left with all their wealth. He thought the best use of the money was to share it with others less fortunate.

Okay, so Santa Claus is pretty cool, although I still think he's no match for the competition.

Regardless, let's all remember that giving to others is one of the best things we can do — at Christmas, and year round.

There's nothing like giving to put a hop in your step and a twinkle in your eye — take it from Santa.