

Drunk drivers in denial, MADD president says

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Four people a day are killed in Canada. Instead of telling those gathered in Markham for the launch of the 2013 Festive RIDE/Red Ribbon Campaign what the death of her niece, Ashley Fogal, at the hands of a drunk driver, did to her family, Kathy Mitchell was in a Barrie courtroom listening to him plead guilty yesterday.

"It's been a very long, drawn-out process for us," Ms Mitchell, the president of MADD's York Region chapter, told The Sun-Tribune while on a lunch break from court proceedings. (She's on today's cover.)

Christopher Dubreuil of Cobourg, who was 27 at the time of the accident - Aug. 11, 2011 - pleaded guilty to impaired driving causing death and impaired driving causing bodily harm. (See story on yorkregion.com)

"It's a relief we don't have to go through the trial. ... Too little too late," Ms Mitchell, a Stouffville resident, said.

"A lot of heartache, a lot of anguish" could have been avoided if he did not make her family go through the judicial process, she said.

Mr. Dubreuil is expected back in court Feb. 6, at which time Ms Mitchell, her sister, Ashley Fogal's mother, along with other fam-

ily members and friends will be able to give victim impact statements.

Mr. Dubreuil was travelling southbound on Rama Road near Orillia when he crossed the centre line and hit another vehicle head on. The northbound driver, Ms Fogal, was pronounced dead at the scene and a passenger was taken to hospital with non-life-threatening injuries, according to OPP.

Ms Fogal was the sister of former Georgina Ice and Newmarket Hurricane hockey goaltender Brad Fogal of Sharon.

Four people a day are killed in Canada due to impaired driving. One hundred and thirty five people are injured daily due to impaired driving, according to Ms Mitchell.

During last year's Festive RIDE/Project Red Ribbon Campaign, 62 drivers were arrested for being impaired by alcohol and three drivers were arrested for being impaired by drug, according to York Regional Police.

Before her niece was killed by an impaired driver, Ms Mitchell always bought a red ribbon and tied it around her vehicle's antenna during the holiday season.

Now in its 26 year, MADD's red ribbon campaign remains a symbol of the organization's efforts to eradicate impaired driving and as a tribute to people who have been killed or injured in impaired driving crashes.

"A red ribbon on a vehicle might hopefully make a person think twice about getting in a car impaired or getting in a car with an impaired driver," Ms Mitchell said.

Now, more than ever, she understands the meaning behind the red ribbon campaign.

Money raised from the crusade pays for the MADD school assembly program, which provides a realistic look for students at the ramifications of impaired driving.

Yesterday, York Regional Police kicked off its 2013 Festive Season RIDE program and the MADD Red Ribbon Campaign at Markham's Milliken Mills High School.

Despite TV and radio commercials as well as RIDE spot checks held throughout the year, people continue to drink and drive.

"It won't happen to them," is Ms Mitchell's only explanation as to why it continues.

That is why Ms Mitchell and MADD are pushing for legislation that would allow police officers to randomly pull drivers over for breath tests.

In 1989, when Australia re-structured its random breath testing legislation, the driver/rider death rate for people with an alcohol level of 0.05 per cent dropped from 113 in 1989 to 49 in 1994, according to Drive and Stay Alive's random breath testing in the State of Victoria, Australia website.

Sad to say that our short season has ended!

Chip Magnet Food Truck would like to thank the residents of Whitchurch-Stouffville for visiting us on Stouffville Rd this past season at Tree Valley Garden Ctr.

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Thank you all!



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