

OPINION



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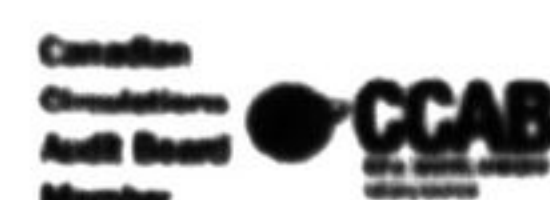
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LETTERS POLICY

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Make a decision that drunk driving is unacceptable

Let's face it: drunk driving can be stopped.

It is a personal choice one makes before heading out for an evening with family and friends and, as holiday gatherings are in full swing, it is something about which to give some serious thought.

But first, consider these sobering statistics:

■ The number of people arrested for impaired driving is on the rise regionally and provincially. During local RIDE spot checks in 2012 in York Region, 12 impaired-driving arrests were made, as compared with 11 in 2011, 8 in 2010 and 10 in 2009;

■ Between Nov. 24 and Jan. 2, 2012, OPP officers charged 693 people with having a blood alcohol concentration level over 80 milligrams. During last year's Festive RIDE campaign, OPP officers charged 682 motorists on the province's roads and highways with impaired driving and;

■ In 2012, 345 people were killed on OPP-patrolled roads. Of those deaths, 72 were alcohol-related. In 2011, 60 alcohol-related deaths occurred on OPP-patrolled roads.

It is without dispute that impaired driving continues to be the leading cause of criminal death in Canada, while at the same time being a completely preventable crime.

For its part, York Regional Police devotes considerable resources to battle impaired driving.

The force's Safe Roads...Your Call program encourages you to call 9-1-1 if you spot a suspected impaired driver. Impaired driving is a crime in progress, much the same way as a break-and-enter and warrants a call to police.

Our local RIDE program is a year-round initiative, but it is stepped up during the festive season, long weekends and during special events.

The LCBO's Deflate the Elephant information campaign is promoting responsible entertaining this holiday season and celebrating those who plan ahead

HAVE YOUR SAY

► What do you think of this issue? E-mail jmason@yrmg.com
A selection of your comments will be published in an upcoming edition.

and help prevent impaired driving

New this year, Deflate the Elephant is partnering with Kia Canada and MADD Canada to host the Speak Up and Win contest, which promotes planning ahead when entertaining and celebrates designated drivers.

Throughout December until Jan. 4, 2014, you have the chance to win the use of a new 2014 Kia Rondo for one year by entering the contest at www.facebook.com/DeflatetheElephant.

The only safe blood-alcohol level is .00, in our view.

The campaign's website (deflatetheelephant.com) offers responsible entertaining tips, alcohol-free mocktail recipes and a home bartending challenge where visitors can learn the proper pour for wine, beer, spirits and coolers.

But there is plenty that you, too, can do.

Decide that it is completely unacceptable to drink and drive. The only safe blood-alcohol level is .00, in our view.

Designate a driver for your event or gathering if you plan to drink, stay the night at your host's or call a taxi.

It's not exactly rocket science. As a caring community, let's reverse the troubling statistics about impaired driving and help put an end to the needless grief and suffering of our neighbours who have lost loved ones to alcohol-related tragedies on our roads.

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Don't drink and drive, eh? Try getting a cab at night

Is it me or is there a problem with trying to get a taxi in Stouffville after 9 p.m.?

Here we are in the midst of the festive season. The police warn us about drinking and driving.

But try to get a cab in this town late at night.

I have talked to people who were aware they would be drinking, so they took a cab to Stouffville's Royal Canadian Legion and arranged with the cab to be picked up at 11:30.

The time of 11:30 came and went, but the taxi never appeared.

A few days later, I spoke with someone who had a similar experience at a Stouffville

bar. No cab showed up for them either.

As the membership chairperson of the legion, I spend a lot of time there through the day and witness the taxi vehicles enter our parking lot during the day. They know where we are.

A few days later, I spoke with someone who had a similar experience at a Stouffville bar. No cab showed up for them either.

Are other people having the same problem?

STEVE PICKARD
STOUFFVILLE

Cheer for museum staff, volunteers

The holiday season is an especially good time to appreciate each other, be it family, friends or folks with whom we work, so I'd like to take this opportunity to thank some people with whom I have volunteered at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum.

Last month, I had the pleasure of volunteering behind the scenes in the kitchen at the Victorian tea.

I can attest to the extraordinary effort everyone put into this event to make it as successful as possible, especially since an extra sitting was added to make it a full day's work, which for me was dish washing.

We were all ready for our tasks (well, sort of!) and now that I've had a chance to recover from my exciting chore, I've found the energy

to write this letter of congratulations.

Obviously, this very successful event would have been unlikely without the efforts of many volunteers, however, without staff's leadership, it would have been impossible.

I began volunteering at the museum five years ago, when cultural manager Dorie Billich led her small team of organized, dedicated and talented "girls".

She treated both her staff and volunteers with respect and appreciation and worked side-by-side with all of us. Today's staff is following her excellent example.

For me, it is the conviviality and fellowship that keeps me volunteering there, no matter the task.

After all, I am blessed with the freedom of a retiree to choose what I do with my time and how to serve in my community. Ditto for all volunteers, who made the

Victorian tea so successful — but we could not have done it without staff's leadership.

Kudos and a Christmas cheer for our museum's inspiring staff and its devoted volunteers.

CATERINA (KATHY) AMENTA
STOUFFVILLE

Roads crew on job

I drove out my long, rural driveway Sunday at 8:30 a.m. to see if my little dead-end road had been cleared.

Due to the hills on McCowan Road, I knew I wouldn't make it out if they were snow-filled.

Wonderful Whitchurch-Stouffville had already been around and cleared them. Well done and thank you to our municipality's roads department.

DIANE WARD
WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE

This is debatable

WEIGH IN ON THE DISCUSSION ... e-mail your comments to jmason@yrmg.com