

You Drink



Through the eyes of victims

JENNIFER KANE

Staff Writer

On Tuesday, May 21, about 30 people convened in the Gregory Forum for a special presentation put on by Oregon Impact, a non-profit organization that provides diversion classes to drunken driver offenders. The goal of Impact is to reduce the number of lives lost by intoxicated driving. A small handful of people volunteered their time to warn listeners about the effects of driving while under the influence of alcohol.

Jeff Gibson, a medical examiner for Clackamas County, began the session by giving the audience some frightening statistics. Gibson's job is simply to figure out how and why people die, and he also gives death notifications. "I'm not here to preach to people. I'm just here to give you straight facts," he said. In the past 20 years alone there have been about 400,000 people killed in drunk driving accidents, which were totally preventable.

He then showed a short video entitled "Carl and Carlie's Story." Carl McDonald is a Sergeant for the Wyoming Highway Patrol, and he lost his 5-year-old daughter, Carlie, to a drunk driving accident. Carlie's mother got behind the wheel of her car after an evening of drinking, and Carlie climbed into the passenger's seat. Her mother was driving well over the speed limit

when she slammed into the back of a semi-truck, and drove underneath it. The car then rotated and hit another vehicle. Carlie had her seat belt on, but it severed when the roof of the car peeled back after the car went underneath the semi. Carlie did not make it out of the car alive. Her



mother, however, did. She was driving with an alcohol limit of .22 (the law is .08), and in turn pleaded "no contest" in court. Carl never had the chance to see his young daughter grow up. "No, I didn't think it would happen to me. Of course not," he says, "I'm here to tell you it can happen to anyone."

After the video, three people graciously told of their personal experiences with drunk driving.

Julie's son was the last to arrive at a friend's house one night, where they had all been drinking for a few hours. Wanting to catch up, her son threw back a few in quite a short amount of time. The boys then became hungry and wanted to go out for food. Since her son had been the last to get to

the house, he offered to be "designated driver," and take his two friends down the road to the store.

It was about 9:15 p.m. on a foggy night when her son hit some gravel while driving too fast. His car went between a mailbox and telephone pole and flipped upside down. He wasn't seat belted in, and his head flew out of the car window, and smashed underneath the car. His friends were wearing their seat belts, and walked away from the crash without a scratch. "What he didn't realize," Julie said, "is that designated driver means .00 - nothing."

Tammy was the next speaker. She began her short story by telling the listeners that her biggest fear when she was a child was getting the back seat of a car when her father had been drinking. She recalled a time when her dad handed her 14-year-old sister the keys and told her to get them home. He then proceeded to pass out in the passenger's seat of the car. Today, Tammy does not maintain a relationship with her father. She last talked to him in 1999 to tell him he was a grandfather. She believes that he still drinks and drives this day.

Ron was the third speaker to go, and was able to give a different view on the drinking and driving experience.

In January 1988, Ron stopped by a local pub to have a few beers

after work with some friends. He ordered a small pitcher (which is a little over 2 beers) and had made a promise to himself that it would be all he would drink. Friends then proceeded to buy rounds for the group, and Ron continued to drink, blaming it on peer pressure. "The next thing I remember from the tavern was racking the balls at the pool table," Ron told the listeners. "Next I woke up in Emanuel Hospital with two people I didn't recognize standing over me." It was his mother and sister. They told him about the car crash, and that three people died. Going around a sharp turn at 70 mph, he hit a car straight on, and killed three of the four people inside. A wife and two daughters. The husband survived the collision.

Charged with manslaughter, assault, and driving while intoxicated, Ron served just less than eight years in prison. "I used to think I could drive safer [while under the influence]. This safe driver went around a corner at 70 mph."

Ron's final words of advice to the audience were simple, and surely rang in everyone's heads as they made their way to the door and back to classes. "Don't drink and drive. You have big careers ahead of you. Take advantage of it."

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Lives shattered by drinking, driving



Say It Loud & Proud!

Salena De La Cruz

Design Editor

"I haven't had too much to drink. I can drive." That is probably what many of the 400,000 people who have been in traffic fatalities thought

before they got behind the wheel of their cars while under the influence of alcohol.

It's funny how many of us think we are invincible and it will never happen to us. Then one day, everything we love and hold dear is taken from us. Now, I've never lost someone in a drunk driving accident and so I cannot begin to fathom what the victims, survivors, persons driving under the influence and their families could possibly be thinking, but I will say many times I've heard on the news of another accident involving alcohol.

I was watching "Cops," one day and saw a story highlighted about a woman who hit a telephone pole because she was so drunk and passed out at the

wheel. When she woke up the police were there and she didn't even realize it or that she'd even been in an accident. It was then she tried to start her vehicle. Of course it wouldn't start, the engine was practically sitting in the front seat with her. What could have happened just astounds me. How many people can say they've had a few drinks and swore they could drive and then ended up in the same, if not worse, predicament?

I've read many stories online and in the news and I've come to one conclusion: Everyone must think before they drink. I don't mean think, "Yeah, I shouldn't drink," and then forget about it once they start. I encourage everyone to do a

search online for survivors of drunk driving. The stories are devastating. I sat on the computer for a few hours and just read and cried. Peoples lives were severely altered. They lost brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, daughters and sons.

I would like to make a plea to everyone who has ever gotten behind the wheel of a car or boat. **DON'T DO IT.** The next time you get behind the wheel of a motorized vehicle you may not be so lucky, you may hurt yourself, or walk away, but worst of all if you are in an accident, the person you kill could be someone you love.

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Somebody Should Have Taught Him
Retold By Jane Watkins

*I went to a birthday party
but I remembered what you
said.*

*You told me not to drink at all,
so I had a Sprite instead.*

*I felt proud of myself,
the way you said I would,
that I didn't choose to drink and
drive,*

*though some friends said I
should.*

*I knew I made a healthy choice
and*

*your advice to me was right
as the party finally ended
and the kids drove out of sight.*

*I got into my own car,
sure to get home in one piece,
never knowing what was
coming,*

something I expected least.

*Now I'm lying on the pavement.
I can hear the policeman say,
"The kid that caused this wreck
was drunk."*

*His voice seems far away.
My own blood is all around me,
as I try hard not to cry.*

*I can hear the paramedic say,
"This girl is going to die."*

*I'm sure the guy had no idea,
while he was flying high,
because he chose to drink and
drive*

that I would have to die.

*So why do people do it,
knowing that it ruins lives?
But now the pain is cutting me
like a hundred stabbing knives.*

*Tell my sister not to be afraid,
tell Daddy to be brave,
and when I go to heaven to
put "Daddy's Girl" on my grave.*

*Someone should have taught
him
that it's wrong to drink and
drive.*

*Maybe if his mom and dad had,
I'd still be alive.*

*My breath is getting shorter,
I'm getting really scared.
These are my final moments,
and I'm so unprepared.*

*I wish that you could hold me,
Mom,
as I lie here and die.*

*I wish that I could say
I love you and good-bye.*

Information found on
<http://smiley00.tripod.com/poem12.html>

