

Think before you drink and drive



BY JEANA BABCOCK

Now that we've celebrated Thanksgiving, the holidays are in full swing. As you begin decking your halls with boughs of holly are you singing "Tis' The Season To Be Jolly" or is this a time of stress or sadness for you? Every year

is different for me. There are times I put pressure on myself and become stressed about all there is to do in so little time—baking, party planning, shopping in crowds, cleaning, entertaining, etc. Or sometimes I stress about what to buy, how much to spend and if my purchases were "fair" amongst my kids. I've even experienced the loss of dear loved ones. Many times, I have to refocus and fix my eyes on what is most important during this season.

What are your blessings? Where is your focus? Are you preparing to travel? Is your schedule full of holiday parties and gatherings? Is your shopping list taking you all over town? Is your vehicle prepared to get you safely to and fro this season? Are your tires, brakes and other safety features in good form to combat our wintry roads as we discussed in last month's article?

Besides having a safe vehicle to drive, have you considered another part of the holidays that might affect your driving or other motorists? For many reasons, alcohol consumption significantly increases this time of year. In fact, according to some reports, the \$49 billion distilled-spirits industry makes more than 25% of its profits between Thanksgiving and New Years. Wow! With such an increase in a six-week period, can you imagine how this directly impacts the amount of people who drive after drinking? What are the repercussions? How might this affect you or your loved ones? What can you do?

HOW MUCH IS TOO MUCH ALCOHOL?

That depends—there are many factors to consider. Alcohol affects everyone differently. What are you drinking—eggnog, wine, hard liquor? The potency needs to be considered. Are you taking medications? The interactions

can significantly alter how alcohol affects your physical and mental state. Also, you need to factor in your height, weight, amount of food you have consumed, earlier drinks, stress level and so on. Because everyone is different and our bodies are so complicated, there is no equation that can accurately tell you if you are safe to drive after alcohol consumption. Unless you carry a breathalyzer with you, perhaps the best decision is to not drive if you've consumed any amount of alcohol. Does this sound a little extreme? Let's consider the repercussion of making a decision to drive while under the influence.

POSSIBLE REPERCUSSIONS

Have you ever heard someone say "Don't drink and drive, you might get a ticket"? I have. But I've never heard someone say "Don't drink and drive, you could kill someone." That is the reality. Let's just put it out there. Perhaps if we shock someone with the worst thing that could happen, it would greatly influence the decision they make.

Receiving a DUI and killing someone are opposite extremes; both have consequences. The most extreme would be the guilt you would feel from causing injury or death to another person. Or perhaps you will no longer be living yourself—and how would that devastate your family?

What about the consequences of receiving a DUI citation? I have to check driving records before I hire someone. You see, my employees must be able to drive in order to properly care for a vehicle and a customer. Did you know that commercial insurance will not insure a driver if he or she has had a DUI in five years? Maybe this doesn't affect you because you don't drive for your job. Consider these other possible consequences: (1) Suspended license; (2) You could lose your job. A DUI is a legitimate reason for your employer to terminate employment; (3) Insurance revocation or at the very least, significantly increased rates; (4) Loss of professional licenses (nurses, doctors, plumbers, etc); (5) You could miss a lot of work—court appearances, mandatory treatment, etc. Do any of these repercussions deter you from getting behind the wheel after drinking? Do they make



you want to educate your loved ones?

YOUR RESPONSIBILITY

It is your responsibility as an adult to commit to not operating a motor vehicle after drinking. Be proactive by taking a cab to your festivities or at least putting the taxi number in your cell phone so you are prepared. Commit to not drinking and driving before you even go to your events.

If you are celebrating the season with non-alcoholic beverages, offer to be a designated driver. Watch out for others and be as assertive as you need to be by helping others make responsible decisions.

Educate your children. Have you ever discussed this subject with them? Have you considered showing them pictures of what vehicles look like after a drunk driving accident? The impression it makes may just encourage them to make a responsible decision in the future or help them assist their friends in doing so. Let

them read this article and have a discussion about the consequences. You should also help them recognize the signs of another motorist who may be under the influence: swerving, driving too slow or fast, no illuminated headlights, erratic braking, straddling the center line, etc. By having these conversations with your kids, it may even help keep you accountable in practicing what you preach.

Accidents related to drinking and driving are 100% preventable. I am sure your family and friends are just as important to you as mine are to me. If you are a responsible adult and choose to drink alcoholic beverages this holiday season, on behalf of my loved ones and yours, I implore you to make the responsible decision to plan ahead of time for a sober ride safely home. 'Tis the season to be jolly! As we celebrate this glorious season, let us keep our eyes focused on our blessings ... and let us be safe as we do so.

Article courtesy of Babcock Auto Care.