

Winner
Candice Harwood
Greenwood High School

That night changed all of our lives. The screaming and sobs of the family and friends still haunt my most horrifying nightmares. After the prom, an intoxicated teenager drove his girlfriend home. He hit a car head-on, in which the vehicle consisted of a mother and her 11-month-old baby. Nobody took the young boy's keys. No one offered the teenager a ride home. *Why did it happen?* The young boy is now serving time in prison for vehicular homicide. He had dreams of attending college and having a family. His girlfriend now lives in a church cemetery's grave. The mother is now a quadriplegic, and the child she had longed for is now only a precious memory. There are consequences and lost lives, and this is the message I want to convey to everyone. This message is not only for teenagers but involves people of all ages -- you absolutely cannot drink and drive.

I would organize a team of classmates from my AP English class, teachers, and parents at Greenwood High School to market our projects. Our main goal would be to obtain the support and solicit funding from local businesses, community agencies, and churches that would be interested in having drunk drivers off our roads. The following projects would be discussed:

- I would suggest that we bring in the MADD Multimedia Show. This show raises awareness of American's #1 youth drug problem as well as unsafe teen driving, the #1 killer of teens. According to www.madd.org, the high-energy show catches students' attention with poignant stories of real young people, current music hits, music videos, and clips from major motion pictures.
- I would suggest that we order Buzz Free Prom merchandise from MADD. Each student would have the opportunity to sign a pledge sheet to stay drug-free for the prom. Other merchandise to order would include posters with shocking catch phrases. One poster portrays a deceased girl lying in a casket, and the line reads, "Who says you can't wear your prom dress twice?"
- Our police department needs to be praised for providing Fatal Vision. According to www.fatalvision.com, research shows that information is twice as likely to be retained when it is delivered in a more involved hands-on way compared to the more traditional lecture approach. I would suggest that the fatal vision unit be made available to that every high school and college student in Warren County would have the opportunity to have this experience. I would suggest that an alcohol-related wrecked car be parked at all the high schools on a quarterly basis.

Kentucky law prohibits those under age 21 from drinking alcohol; therefore, any teenager who drives with even a trace amount of alcohol is guilty of DUI. I would recommend that zero tolerance laws for alcohol continue to be supported. However, Senate Bill 160 should be supported. Kentucky law prohibits anyone from taking illegal drugs, but the law should reflect that anyone who drives with "traces" of illegal drugs in their body should be found guilty of DUI. The bill seeks to subject those who use illicit drugs while driving the same consequences as those who drink and drive.

A strong message needs to be sent to people of all ages to not drive under the influences of alcohol (or drugs), and this can be achieved through visual demonstrations provided by support and funding from the community, businesses, and churches. The visual demonstrations would consist of a MADD multimedia show, MADD prom merchandise, and the police department providing the fatal vision until and wrecked vehicle. If anyone happens to see someone wanting to drive after having a drink, our motto should always be, "Give me your keys now!"

Winner
Meredith Beckner
Bowling Green High School

When I was nine, my oldest brother Jay was hit head-on by a drunk driver. Luckily the only thing lost in the wreck was his car. The man who hit him was 26 years old and plenty old enough to realize how wrong drinking and driving is. Drunk driving has always been an issue close to my heart.

Being a senior in high school, I have been exposed to others that drink, and have never approved of it. Under-age drinking is dangerous and can have no benefit to these teenagers. I make a verbal message to all my peers, but also try and show an example of a teenager who can have fun without putting me or my health in danger.

I want them to realize that under-age drinking has many serious consequences: school suspension or expulsion if drinking at a school-sponsored event, lower academic performance due to lack of focus, loss of friendships, difficult relationships with parents, and worst of all, accidents that can kill. But it's tough to make them believe when lots of teenagers feel like "that won't ever happen to me."

A great time that all students in high school could be reached is through their English class. Every student must take English each year and speakers could be brought in to tell their stories. I could invite students, community leaders, law enforcement officers, business people, judges, and possibly those convicted of a DUI and have them speak to these English classes.

There are also a few nationally known speakers who could address the entire school. Mississippi State Trooper Pete Collins is an example. He is both passionate about what he speaks about and can captivate an audience.

Yearly poster contests are held by the Country Peddler for advertising and those posters are professionally printed. I would like to see them sponsor such a contest to combat drinking and driving. Winning posters could be printed and displayed in high schools, movie theatres, and bowling alleys, anywhere young drivers would see them.

I don't know enough about the laws on drinking, or drinking and driving to say how they should be changed. What I do know, however, is that the penalties for drunk driving are not severe enough and are often not even enforced. The man who hit my brother was not punished, only what we were able to get through an attorney, which wasn't much.

MADD and SADD are organizations that pursue drunk driving legislation. I would have a SADD chapter in each of the high schools as well as the local university. There is strength in numbers and those people who chose to not drink and drive could find support in these groups. The chapters in turn could support the organizations putting pressure on legislators to toughen drunk driving laws.

Most teenagers, once they graduate from the DARE. program, are tired of hearing about “saying no” to drugs and alcohol, but we must not stop telling them not to drink and drive. Their lives could depend on it.

Winner
Lily Lim
Warren Central High School

The message I would want to communicate to teens and young adults is drunk driving is dangerous and has serious repercussions. I would target this group because many times, new and young drivers are inexperienced and do not know the possible consequences of their actions. With the help of the police, I would recreate an accident. Students would be chosen from all of the high schools to take part in this recreation. These influential students would reenact the accident, telling the audience throughout the film their thoughts and decisions. At the end of the film, the students would examine the decisions they made that led to the horrible consequences they face now.

I would show the students that drunk driving does not end in a happy ending. Sometimes there is a chance nothing would happen, but that chance is very slim. Would every drunk person who got behind the wheel be able to handle their decision after a horrible accident? Once they sobered up, would they realize the magnitude of their decision to drive drunk? Their decision to drink and drive could lead to jail time or even death; to know that you were the one to kill someone else, your friend, or innocent people.

The law should be more severe to make an example out of those who participate in drunk driving. Billboards should ask people if they are willing to be responsible for the death of their friend because they decided to drive drunk. Commercials would show that people who drink and drive can look forward to spending a long time in jail. Bad decisions should have harsh consequences. The law would be harsher by giving drunk drivers longer periods of time in jail, order drunk drivers to take classes to stop drunk driving, and underage drinkers would have to stay in jail or juvenile detention as long as legal age drinkers.

I would ask for families who were victims of drunk driving to speak to students and show what kind of impact it has on who was hurt the most. It would open the students' minds and realize that they shouldn't be so wrapped up in themselves. Restaurants would advocate for those who are too impaired to drive to call for cabs instead of allowing them to drive home and limit the amount of alcoholic drinks a customer is allowed to have unless they agreed to taking a cab home.

Winner
Kimberly Simpson
Warren East High School

My best friend's prized possession, her 2004 Toyota Four Runner is totaled. My childhood friend spends his Thursday nights in court mandated alcohol rehabilitation meetings after running his brand new Avalanche into a brick home. Worst of all, two of the most compassionate and kind young men I have ever met are dead. These events occurred because they all got behind the wheel of a car feeling invincible after a few alcoholic drinks.

Experiencing these events first hand is reason enough for me to refrain from consuming alcohol. However, most teenagers don't realize the extent to which they are endangering themselves and many others when they drink and drive. To all of the young adults who have never been personally touched by the affects of drinking and driving, I would like to share my message with them. I have seen the gradual deterioration of students at the top of my class due to binge drinking, the loss of thousands of dollars in damaged property, and worst of all, the loss of lives due to one mistake. That's all it takes. Just that one time you decide that you are okay to drive could cost you your life and/or the lives of innocent motorists.

There are several laws currently in place to combat the consumption of alcohol by minors. However, twenty-one states do not have laws prohibiting those under 21 from drinking. The National Underage Drinking Act of 1984 does not call for states to enact laws against underage drinking, but only against the purchase and possession of alcoholic beverages. In Kentucky, it is obviously illegal to distribute alcohol to minors. However, what many people don't realize is that there are six exceptions to this law. It is perfectly legal for a parent/guardian to provide their child with alcohol. It is also legal for a spouse of legal age to distribute their spouse alcohol, and for minors to drink due to religious purposes. While these exceptions are common, the remaining exceptions are startling. These exceptions state that minors can drink in any private location, in their private residence, or in their parents' homes. States may charge persons who have consumed alcohol with alcohol possession or other violations but they are, in essence, enforcing a non-existing law. This law, or lack thereof, is one that I would suggest needs to be revised. I believe it should be illegal for minors to consume alcohol period. Revising this law, in my opinion, would decrease the instances of underage drinking and thus the number of young adults that choose to drink and drive.

Many of the various losses incurred because of drinking and driving can be dramatically decreased if these exceptions weren't in place. I believe it would strongly discourage this activity to continue due to fear of legal repercussions. Drinking and driving is a serious issue and a better solution to this problem must be enacted. Too many lives are risked due to this careless behavior and it must be more effectively combated.

Gabrielle Niarhos
Warren Central High School

Every Monday the talk at school tends to consist all about all of the “rad parties” that occurred over the weekend. Of course, the typical high school party consists, not only of great time among friends, but normally alcohol as well. Unfortunately, there is always talk about how “so and so” went driving under the influence. This dangerous feat will not only land them a night in jail, but it can lead to their tragic death, or even the death of another person.

Drunk driving is a major problem here in Bowling Green, Kentucky, as well as many other communities. This is because there is very little that anyone can do to stop it without being in direct contact with the person committing the crime, and it is a crime.

There are very few things that could be done to help fix this problem, and the state has already set strict punishments for this violation. As long as parents give their kids any sort of freedom, and they have a car, they can pretty much do as they please. Someone will always have an older brother or friend that can get the teens some alcohol or other substances. The police just need to keep a close look out on the teens that are out late at night.

One thing that might help with the problem, and might help the police, is that if the community could find a way to make it easier for the police to spot drunk drivers. Car manufacturers are making cars easier and more convenient to drive. Cars are now being made with automatic lights. One of the easiest ways for a cop to spot a drunk driver is when they see a car with their lights off in the dark. That is just one example. Things like this do not only make it convenient to drive a car, but also make it convenient for a drunk driver to get away with his crime.

These are just a few suggestions for helping improve our community, and the world.

Ines Dugandzija
Warren Central High School

“I ask everyone who has been drinking not to drive home tonight. Don’t worry, I have paid for the cabs. They are ready and waiting to pick up anyone in need of transportation.”

I listened as the organizer of the New Year’s event that my parents attended directed this statement to couples in their thirties and forties as the celebration came to a close. I only happened to stop by to wish my parents a happy new year after leaving the event I attended that night. Brilliant, I thought.

Drunk driving, an issue that can tear friends apart, leave individuals in jail, or break the hearts of family members because of a selfish and irresponsible decision, is not impossible to avoid. Yes, it is impossible to restrain the community from drinking, but thinking is one thing we are all capable of. This message is directed to everyone, from underage youth to adults, from children to parents, and the community as a whole.

New devices to detect drunk drivers have been developed in the past months, but nothing other than responsibility, knowing the circumstances, and a sense of what’s going on before taking that first sip is needed. Killing a mother of a two-year old child, with years ahead to spend with her toddler because of two hours of “fun” which probably was spent not remembering one single thing, all because of an impaired driver who could not even have the decency to find a sober friend?

Who would be better to tell this story than a victim, now in jail for the rest of their life? It would be great if the police department would let high school students listen to the story of an individual behind bars; an honest individual who would be willing to tell the truth and perhaps be an impact to the student body.

School presentations usually given in the auditorium, with movie clips, and a police officer or other official speaking about “why drunk driving is bad.” Honestly, it’s disappointing to see how many students sleep, laugh, and disrespect the organization of the program as a whole.

Would changing the law really help? The law states that twenty-one is the legal drinking age, but as we know, underage drinkers are crawling around like a pile of ants. The only thing would be to form a dry community, but who says it wouldn’t be brought in illegally, causing even more trouble?

One of the activities/businesses in our community that puts a smile on my face are the Designated Driver Vehicles. Knowing that there are a dozen intoxicated individuals in the vehicle, not driving, reminds me that it is not impossible to avoid intoxicated roads. We need to get across that Designated Driver Vehicles, parents, the police department, friends, and a helpful community surround us day and night. Many times teens fear calling an adult after drinking because they are underage. Naturally, there are consequences for that. However, there are less harmful consequences than killing oneself or another because of fear to call for help. Most

important of all is learning to be a responsible and mature individual when making decisions. Yes, it is something that has to be carefully taught over time.

“Did you have a good time last night? Did everyone get home safe?” asked my mother the morning after the New Year’s party.

“Yes, I drove two of them home and the other two are still asleep in my room,” I answered with a smile on my face.

Brittanie Yancey
Warren Central High School

The message I would want to communicate is that drunk driving endangers the lives of innocent people. This message goes out to everyone in the community to let them know that drunk driving is very dangerous. Okay, people are dying everyday because some idiot decides he wants to drink and drive. Not knowing that he is endangering the lives of the people around him and of course he endangers his own life.

We need to be aware of what underage and young adults are doing when they are driving. Parents should make sure that their child is not drinking and driving. I know that is hard to know if they are but they should still make sure they know what their child is doing and what kind of friends they are hanging with. Because their child could be the person that kills someone innocent or themselves.

Personally, I would have classes for those who choose to drink and drive. They should be made to go to these classes until they understand the meaning of not to drink and drive. There are going to be videos of actual accidents that have actually happened, it should not scare them but teach them the meaning of not to drink and drive. Slide shows would be a great help also.

You would think that drivers would understand not to drink and drive but I guess they don't because so many people are getting killed or injured. All we can do is put the word out to let them know not to drink and drive.

Kathryn Burchfield
Warren Central High School

There are numerous messages dealing with drunk driving, especially among young people, which need to be communicated. The issue of people driving while under the influence of alcohol is a very serious one, and therefore, one that requires a group effort to truly combat. I would want to speak with religious leaders and make sure that they realize they have an extremely powerful force on their side: youth who are strong in themselves and their faith and who can speak more effectively to others their age about the dangers of drinking and driving. The church could host an event with activities to promote awareness and a chance for teenagers to talk to a counselor or someone their age about the effects of mixing alcohol and driving. I would also encourage business leaders to step up. They could provide the means to advertise such an event or ones like it. They could also team up with each other and organize something similar. The bottom line is that the community simply needs to be made more aware. Many people, including adults, do not fully comprehend the consequences that come along with drunk driving. They need to see the damage that it does. They need to see the lives that it ruins and the lives that it simply ends. There is no reason that someone should be injured or die simply because someone made the mistake of pointlessly drinking alcohol and then unintelligently driving. There are good DUI laws in place, but while it may deter some people, others still uncaringly, or unthinkingly, drink and then drive. Once they get behind that wheel and injure themselves or others, then it is too late. It is definitely a positive thing that the punishment increases for repeat offenders. Even if their licenses are revoked, though, many will still drive. There is one program in place already that I believe is very effective. I have seen a MADD presentation before and found it to be quite good. It is a video, but unlike others, it is put together in a format that catches the attention of younger people. Instead of a monotone speaker droning on, it is laced with popular music and eye-catching graphics. Things such as this pull the viewer in and that is where the deeper message is found. Bringing the message close to home is the key. However, it shouldn't have to take a relative or friend being seriously hurt or dying to finally cause someone to see the error of their ways. At that point, finality sets in and there is no going back. The truth is that horrendous things do occur as a result of simply drinking and driving and that people's lives can change for the worst in one split second. The community needs to be made more aware of that fact and educated in order to improve the issue of people driving under the influence.

Lyndsey Duke
Warren Central High School

In this boozed-soaked culture, society winks at underage drinking. Focusing on preventing one of the sources of drunk driving by those who are underage and by young adults, can help combat this ongoing problem in our community. Stopping youngsters from trying to buy alcohol would be very advantageous. Forming a partnership between retailers and law enforcement would help prevent illegal underage alcohol purchases by minors or adults that purchase alcohol for minors or adults that purchase alcohol for minors. By bringing law enforcement in retail outlets as plain clothes police officers to foil underage purchases would pay off tremendously. If caught, offenders could find themselves going to court, paying fines, losing their license and maybe going to jail.

By presenting a strong public awareness campaign through posters, outdoor billboards, and other public service messages, warn youth and adults that the program has been implemented in their community. In addition, provide training to officers and retailers. The risk of getting caught is always present. Many violators would leave the premises when they notice the signs.

It is impossible for young adults and teenagers to drink responsibly because they don't know their limits. They don't have limits. Teens and parents need to be encouraged to learn about the risk and responsibilities of driving drunk. Targeting teens and parents will increase awareness of the consequences of driving drunk. Outreaching and educating will continue to reduce the number of youth that drink and drive. Whichever resource is used, books, movies, speakers, seminars, handouts, or advertisements, only good will become of it. Without some type of outreach program teenagers could be experiencing heaving in the toilet night after night, stomach pumping, waking up naked with someone they don't know and don't like. If this isn't enough to discourage someone from drinking, then consider the following:

Partying with your peers. Everyone is drinking. You want to bond, but you really don't know how to socialize or make friends so you choose to drink. Your ability to make smart decisions is affected. You leave the party, driving drunk. You have an accident. Someone dies, not you. you're convicted of murder. A door closes in your life. You're put behind a door that you can't open. Funny how we miss the little things in life, like opening a door for ourselves.

Chase Goff
Warren Central High School

Drunk driving is something that affects everyone. It knows no racial, economic, or ethnic preferences as this issue can devastate anyone's life in a matter of seconds. I believe that this message has to be proclaimed to the masses so that lives can be saved and the effects of drunk driving can be known. I believe that this message should be taken to schools so that people can keep themselves from driving drunk before they have the chance. I believe working with groups such as MADD and DARE could better help spread this message.

I believe that new legislation should be proposed to make the crime of a DUI more heavily penalized. I also believe the government should allot more money to programs to help them get the message across of the consequences of driving under the influence. The first step toward this plan of action would be to write to my state senators and representatives explaining my ideas. To do more, I believe I could take my message to the masses and possibly persuade others to see my side. I believe that the government could do a lot more to help out the cause but without them knowing what needs to be done, my ideas are useless.

Another idea I have is to develop a program to be taken into schools and various places throughout the community. This would include different skits to show effects of drunk driving, guest speakers who have been changed because of a drunk driving situation, and various activities to get students involved in the program. I believe this would benefit the community. It would be different than other programs because the guest speakers would have personal stories to share. I believe that you can best learn things from people who have experienced them, not just read about them.

I believe that it is the community's responsibility to want to learn about drunk driving to make the community safer. I also think it would be in my best interest to work with religious leaders because they have the most influence over people in their community. I think that the police would be a great tool to use because they have been in situations that have been devastated because of drunk driving. They have had to deal with this first-hand. I believe that applying these tactics, we can better our community by decreasing the number of drunk drivers. This would make this place safer and more pleasant for everyone.

Andrea Biller
Warren Central High School

Unfortunately, underage drunk driving is very familiar to me. Each year of high school I have been involved in our school's club PRIDE. This club promotes activities that don't involve drug or alcohol use. This year, I am Secretary of this club. As a result, I attended a Mothers Against Drunk Driving seminar in February. This association, also known as MADD, talks to teens about preventing alcohol use and getting behind the wheel while intoxicated.

At this seminar I learned various ideas. These ideas could be used to combat the issue of drunk driving. One of the ideas was to get the MADD presenters to come to our high school to give a powerful presentation on the outcomes of drunk driving sometime in April. We wanted to do this in April because of spring break and prom coming around the corner. We hope that this presentation will make students in our school think twice about drinking and driving.

Another idea they had would be for teens who were 18 years or older to work for the police. It's a program they have that is very effective. The police teach the teen to go into local gas stations and liquor stores to try and buy alcohol. If the place would sell it to them, they would later get fined. I think this is very effective because many kids can somehow manage to buy alcohol from local places.

The last effective idea would be to really crack down on distributing to minors and for drinking and driving. I think if the laws were harsh enough, then people would not try to get away with it. Obviously our laws are too lenient because this problem of drunk driving is continuing to grow.

Drinking and driving takes the lives of many people everyday. It's a problem that has got to be dealt with. I believe that if communities team up then the problem can be solved. The PRIDE officers at my school have already tried to make a difference. Some of us are working with police officers to catch gas stations, and some of us are working with MADD to bring a strong message to our student body. The problem is here, and it's up to caring people and the youth of today to stop this illegal activity.

Drake Midgett
Greenwood High School

The following essay will introduce you to pros and cons of drinking. It will also give you a clear understanding in why you shouldn't drink alcohol. Alcohol is a depressant; it impairs your ability to drive, slows down your reaction time and causes you to make some risky decisions that you wouldn't normally take. This essay will also help you comprehend how and why things happen, because of alcohol, and explain ways we can prevent the misuse of alcohol.

Drunk driving is a crime that is a constant dilemma in our community. Drunk driving is considered a serious crime in every state, and it should be. I have seen several students from my high school get injured and in a few cases die because of driving under the influence. I think that it is wrong, reckless, and wastes many lives. People who misuse alcohol not only hurt themselves but also hurt people around them, including the public, and create carelessness on the nations highways. According to the National Highway and Transportation Safety Administration, 2004 drinking and driving kills someone in the United States every 31 minutes, and non-fatal injuries to someone every two minutes.

Drunk driving can result in many different punishments. First time offenders usually get driver's license restrictions, fines, mandatory attendance of drunk driver's education classes, mandatory attendance of "Alcoholics Anonymous" meeting or alcohol counseling, community service, or probation. In addition, I would have to ride the bus for the remainder of the school year because I would lose my car. Routine drunk drivers face more severe consequences, by driver's license revocation, incarceration, and larger fines. It is common for people to be sentenced to jail for a second drunk driving conviction. Some states impose very serious penalties on habitual drunk drivers. A third time drunk driving can get you a jail time up to five years.

Another thing to think about is if you drink and drive and happen to get in an accident in which you kill someone, you can be charged with manslaughter and face up to life in prison. These consequences are good enough for me to not drive drunk but I think that if they changed the consequences and made them to where the first time you are caught you get a large fine and more jail time then there would be less people doing it.

Together we can make a difference in the fight against drunk driving. I think the community should have more aggressive advertising. Research has that young people, unlike adults, are drawn to ads that associate alcohol with sex appeal, athletic prowess, a glamorous lifestyle, and risk-taking behavior. Therefore we can make signs, commercials on television, newspaper ads, and also billboards that have alcohol prevention slogans. Religious leaders can also help by using their local churches to start programs rejecting the use of alcohol, and driving under the influence.

In conclusion the police can assist by visiting the local schools and talking to upper classmen about the negative effects that alcohol can have if abused. This extra effort to establish an active police program would benefit the school, parents, and the student who may be abusing this destructive sickness. If we can get this message across to younger people that drunk driving is

wrong then hopefully they will not start to drink at a young age which will limit the number of drunk driving cases in our community.

Rachel Brown
Greenwood High School

Drunk Driving is an important issue that affects everyone. It is an increasing problem and in all honesty hard to combat. The main message that I would want to communicate, to those who are underage, is that drinking is not going to make you “cool,” no matter how often you drink or whom you drink with. Many underage people think that if they drink with their older siblings then they will be accepted. They furthermore think that by drinking they will earn respect. That is a joke. Their peers will actually frown upon those underage that drink. They will lose more respect than they earn. This loss is not worth the so-called gain. I know that personally, when I find out that a peer of mine drinks, all respect that I had for them is shot. I want to stress the point that there is no reason to drink. Many of those who drink think that it is just a way to loosen up and relax. Well this is true. The person becomes so relaxed that they make unintelligent decisions that could potentially haunt them. You always hear stories about what brainless event took place at a party where drinking was involved. I have co-workers who drink, unfortunately. I hear accounts of what happened when they got drunk the night before. I hear about how somebody’s wallet ends up in his or her pockets, or how they get someone’s cell phone. This kind of behavior is uncalled for and juvenile.

I think that presentations showing peoples’ behavior when they drink would be beneficial. I know if I had been shown pictures of things that people do when they drink, I would encourage many of my friends not to drink. Along with those pictures, I would show pictures of car accidents that have occurred because of a drunk driver. Furthermore, I would show pictures, if possible, of accident victims. As for events that could be developed, maybe supervised parties could be planned.

I know that this does not really talk about drunk driving, however, I believe that in combating drunk driving, the underlying problem of underage drinking itself needs to be dealt with and handled.

Devin Dewitt
Greenwood High School

Drinking is a problem that no matter what we try to do, it is continuous. It seems the more laws that are given the more kids break them. The drinking age is twenty-one but somehow underage kids still find a way to get it. Marijuana is illegal, but it is still out there and kids still are using it at a very young age. I think as judicial leaders we need to keep the laws strict, and keep police officers enforcing them. This can only go so far though. No matter how old or young you are, everyone just wants to fit in and be cool. They want to be like their favorite celebrities or the most popular kid. This is not just the community's responsibility, but also mine. I feel like when we as kids set a good example, it leads others to follow. I am a part of a bible study group and I feel like that is one of the best solutions for everyone. That is why I think it is our responsibility to help promote things like this. From my own experiences at my bible study, I have noticed many changes within our group. It started out with a small number of people and became larger as kids began to realize that there is more to life than just partying. All it took as a couple of people, and then more and more people began to join. It is kind of like a ripple effect.

I believe that teenagers my age are more likely to listen to what their peers have to say and will follow examples more than if an authoritative figure were to lecture them on what is the right thing to do when it comes to drinking and driving. At my bible study we get together and discuss the bible and do other activities that do not involve drugs and alcohol. A lot of teenagers need activities like this bible study to show them that you can have fun without using drugs or alcohol. The main message that I would send to teenagers my age is to join groups such as this because there are ways to have safe and sober fun.

Emily Monroe
Greenwood High School

Drunk driving by underage individuals and young adults is a community wide problem. It is not only the decisions of the individual who drives the car but also of the store clerk who sold the alcohol to the underage person that are wrong. The police officer who lets a swerving car pass and the friend who knows and steps aside are also responsible. Drunk driving is a community problem and needs a community effort to stop it.

If I could have the attention of the community, including the business and religious leaders, and the police, I would tell them it takes everyone's involvement to stop the problem of drunk driving in our community. Families, churches, schools and businesses would need to take actions because drunk driving on the public street of our city affects everyone. If you think about how often we and our loved ones use the streets of our town, you realize no one is safe from the dangers of drunk driving.

The first thing I would propose is to stop the sale of alcohol to underage individuals. If alcohol is harder to get, there will be fewer young people abusing it. I'd suggest this be accomplished by having harsher punishments and fines for any business caught selling alcohol to minors and not checking identifications. Also, enforcing laws pertaining to the amount of distance between the school and a liquor store would help. Having the wrong signals and advertising around impressionable youth all the time is like asking for trouble. Today's young people need to have more positive messages than negative.

I know that no matter how many laws are put in place about selling alcohol to minors they will still find a way to get it. So my second proposal is educating teenagers and young adults about the dangers of driving under the influence if they choose to participate in drinking. Education is vital in all situations. The more educated you are, the better off you are. So when young people are informed that when 5.1 million teenagers admit to binge drinking and on average eight people die a day in alcohol related crashes (soundvision.com) they might make better choices. I would like to see classes set up with the purpose of educating youth about drunk driving. They could be mandatory for getting a driver's license or part of college orientation, as a lot of students take their first drink during their freshman year in college. I believe it would make a difference.

In conclusion, I believe drunk driving in our community can be stopped. By controlling the sale of alcohol and educating minors and young adults about drunk driving, improvements can be made in our society. However, in order for these suggestions to work, a community effort must be volunteered. Everyone in the community, including business leaders, religious leaders, police, schools, and families, will need to come together and put a stop to drunk driving by those who are underage and young adults.

Justin Basham
Greenwood High School

Drunk driving is a very serious problem in our community. I have known a few people who have been involved in wrecks because they had been drinking at a party or friend's house and decided to drive home. Luckily, none of them were seriously injured. Although they were still not injured, they did lose their license, and they did have to pay court costs. The fact still remains that drunk driving is bad and illegal and is a very real and dangerous issue in our community.

The laws that currently exist to try and stop not only underage and young adult drinking and driving but **all** drinking and driving, are excellent laws. However, the manner in which some of these incidents are handled leave room for much improvement. Many times a drunk driver receives little more than a slap on the wrist for his actions because of their ties to an influential member of the community. If these criminals are not punished, they don't learn any lessons for being pulled over. More times than not the drunk driver will be out on the road the next weekend drinking and driving once again. I have not witnessed this personally, but I have been told stories by credible sources that indicate this is happening. One improvement I think should be made is: if a person is pulled over for a DUI they should automatically lose their license for a longer period of time which is decided by their criminal record and their blood alcohol content. I also think these underage drivers should be required to undergo a rehabilitation type program before having their license returned to them. I believe that this would deter many people from driving under the influence of alcohol if for no other reason than the inconvenience of not having a license for an extended period of time.

I also believe a program much like the DARE program should be developed for high school students to further impress upon them what could happen if they choose to drink and drive. This program would show them the dangers and consequences to drunk driving. Every student in Warren County has completed DARE. program in elementary school; however, in high school they tend to forget the images that had such an impact on them in the DARE program. Many high school students think that they are invincible and that nothing can hurt them. The program that I'm talking about would show the students pictures of wrecks and people who have been involved in wrecks caused by drunk drivers. I also think it would make an impact on these underage drinkers if they could see the effects of just one drink and how it can alter your senses and abilities. This program would also stress that when a person drinks and drives he or she is not only endangering their own life, but also the lives of other people traveling on those same roads.

It is very important that people know that they are not only endangering their lives, but the lives of those around them. When a person drinks and drives he or she endangers everyone around them. The tragic Carrolton bus wreck was caused by a drunk driver. The lives of innocent children on their way home from King's Island were cut short because one man decided he would go out drinking and then drive home. His stupidity has caused more pain and suffering to the families of these children than anything else could have ever done. His decisions that night not only ended the lives of the innocent victims on the bus, but ruined the lives of countless others.

The fact of the matter is that drunk driving is not only unsafe, it is also highly illegal; however, unless the community, the schools, churches and the legal community work together to address the problem of underage and young adult drunk driving, the problem will not be solved. It is imperative that these groups make a concerted effort to put a stop to this problem before another accident like the Carrolton bus crash occurs in our community. While this was a tragedy of unimaginable proportions, any life affected by drunk driving is too many and we, as members of this community, have an obligation to work together to put a stop to the needless suffering caused by drunk driving.

Ryanne Embry
Greenwood High School

According to a new release from the Kentucky State Police on 9-21-05, "In Kentucky during 2004, there were 931 alcohol related collisions involving a driver under the age of twenty-one." As far as I am concerned that is 931 too many. Driving while under the influence is an ongoing problem for our community. Drunk driving puts you as well as others at risk for serious injury or even death. However, with the help of the community, business and religious leaders, and the police this war can be won.

One step to help prevent drunk driving would be to set up random roadblocks. Police do this some now but they announce where the roadblocks are going to be. From my high school experience, the kids know where these roadblocks are set up, so they take alternate routes home. Therefore, these roadblocks are not as effective as they could be if their locations were unknown. Another issue police could aid in would be to talk to children in school at an earlier age. School wide assemblies should be held for the police to discuss all the risks and dangers of driving drunk as well as the potential punishments one could face. I believe these talks should start during middle school. I also believe the community could help in this aspect. Someone whose life has been forever changed by a drunk driver could provide a powerful testimony. In fact, that testimony may be the best tool in helping to combat the problem of drunk driving.

As far as existing laws go, I do not believe that they are strict enough. It is amazing to me that someone who receives a DUI could be back on the road in six months to a year. I understand that people make mistakes, but risking others' lives is not something to take lightly. I think one should lose their license for a minimum of a year and vary depending on the circumstances. If it were to happen twice I do not think that person should have the privilege to ever drive again. After that happened a few times, people may take getting a DUI more seriously.

Drunk driving is a serious problem in our community and should be taken very seriously. With these few small changes, I believe we would see a decline in the number of alcohol-related collisions in Kentucky. In the future, maybe we will no longer have 931, but instead have zero alcohol-related collisions.

Jennifer Pope
Greenwood High School

Teenagers are getting more involved in drugs and substance abuse more now than ever before, and one of the most common substances abused is alcohol. Although it is seen as morally wrong in today's cultures, as well as illegal for teenagers to drink, the problem is on the rise. Teenagers are given ample access to alcohol, as well as countless opportunities to break the law by drinking it. This issue is becoming an epidemic in America. While there are numerous reasons for teenagers to start drinking, one of the most common reasons is for entertainment. When combined with driving, teenagers drinking underage can be deadly, and we as a society must take steps to stop this increasing trend.

A person is not legally allowed to drink alcohol until the age of twenty-one, but it is common for most teenagers to have drunk alcohol at least once before that age. The average age when Americans first try alcohol is eleven years old for boys and thirteen years for girls. This is a problem because according to research by the Nation Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, adolescents who begin drinking alcohol before age fifteen are four times more likely to develop alcohol dependence than those who begin drinking at or after age twenty-one.

Alcohol consumption in teenagers is one of the major contributing factors in teenage depression, driving accidents, and substance abuse. Alcohol is a drug used by teenagers to get "drunk," or intoxicated, which means they are inebriated and under the influence of alcohol. The three leading causes of death for fifteen to twenty-four year olds are automobile crashes, homicides and suicides. Alcohol consumption is a usual factor in all three.

Teenagers drink alcohol to get "drunk." Getting drunk is also known as getting "smashed," or inebriated by too much alcohol in the system. Teenagers see this as a fun activity. Many teenagers get drunk in order to lose their inhibitions. Teenagers like to drink alcohol because it makes them feel "wild and crazy." It provides some "fun" for some teenagers who seem to find that there is nothing fun to do. Teenagers often go through a phase in which they get a thrill out of disrespecting the rules. Thus, drinking before the legal age is fun, for it is an easy way to break the law. Drunkenness among teenagers is on the rise, and causes many problems for both the drinking teenagers and their friends and family. I know many people who have been affected by a teen's drinking that resulted in a car accident. I know from experience that it is an awful episode to deal with.

One of the first things we must do in order to solve this growing problem is put an end to underage drinking for fun. We need to provide more and better entertainments and more activities for teens to do after school. So that they don't feel the need to look for entertainment in alcohol. Churches and school should host weekly get-togethers for teenagers so they can have safe fun with their peers. Even teens can take measures to help this problem by influencing their friends to do fun and risk-free things with them. I myself simply don't drink and encourage my friends to do them same. And for those times when there is no stopping teens from drinking, car rides or transportation should be provided; if teens are going to drink, and they likely will sometimes, it is best to make them and other people as safe as we can by ensuring that they don't drive.

Joshua Dorris
Greenwood High School

Drunk driving is a true problem in our community. Day in and day out people are hurt or killed by someone who has been driving while under the influence of alcohol. If I truly were selected to organize my classmates to work with various members of the community there would be many things I would do.

I would talk with local business leaders to try and get them to sponsor special events throughout the year. They could help pay for and throw seminars, meetings, and even festivals for the community to make the public aware of the reality and danger of drunk driving. Because drunk driving is so prevalent among young people, I would especially try to make these special events something young people would want to attend. I would invite young adults, possibly to a Western Kentucky basketball game with a drunk driving awareness theme. At half time, a speaker could talk to the young men and women about drinking and driving.

I would also like to work with various religious leaders around the community to try and get them to emphasize the importance of not driving while intoxicated to their high school and college age classes and get these children to be an example to the community by being responsible and not drinking and driving. The police would also be a valuable tool in the fight against drunk driving, not that they already are. I believe that more roadblocks put up around town, on different nights would be very beneficial. This would cause more people to be caught in the act of drunk driving and more importantly make people afraid to drink and drive. I also believe that new laws and rules should be put into place to help this ongoing problem. One law I believe that should be put into place is that new drivers should have to take a special class over the consequences of drunk driving before they get their license.

The message I would be trying to communicate would be that drunk driving is extremely dangerous and can affect so many people. The majority of drunk drivers think absolutely nothing about the weapon they become when they get behind the wheel of an automobile. Often the wrecks they cause are with other unsuspecting drivers who are punished for doing absolutely nothing wrong. I would want to target this message to young people especially, but to all those who often drink and drive. These actions, I would hope, would help the community in the fight against drunk driving. This is a problem that will continue to persist and all we can do is get the message out that drunk driving is wrong, irresponsible, and dangerous.

Kendra Hamilton
Greenwood High School

We have all heard the horror stories about friends and family killed by a drunk driver. Everyone, including the drunk drivers themselves, knows of someone affected by a drunk driver, but this does not stop them from drinking too much at a party then driving themselves home. If the reality does not affect these irresponsible and immature adults, what will? Only advertisements against drunk driving and more in-depth programs in schools teaching the harms of drinking and driving will persuade young adults and underage drinkers to think before they drink and drive.

When I say, “advertisements against drunk driving,” I mean peer pressure against drinking and driving. Those adolescents that feel strongly about preventing drunk driving can express their feelings through fundraisers for affected families or simple posters on the walls around their school or favorite haunt. If other teens see this point of view from their peers, they may be more likely to accept the idea that drinking and driving has consequences.

Sometimes it is too late to teach teenagers the wrongs of drinking and driving; therefore, programs should be developed to teach elementary and middle grades students about the consequences of drunk driving. I believe that if ideas are put into a child’s head at a young enough age, they will learn to accept them as they grow older. If young children realize that drinking and driving is bad, they will grow up with the idea that they should moderate their drinking once they are of age and that they should never drink and drive.

I plan to form two committees out of my senior class. One committee will make posters to place on Greenwood’s walls and public places that will allow it. The more other teens and young adults see how passionate their peers are against drunk driving, the more they will think twice before drinking and driving. The second committee will be in charge of promoting the idea of programs demoting drinking and driving in elementary and middle schools. With these committees of dedicated young adults, the community will benefit from the drop in numbers of accidents caused by drunk drivers.

Jessica Williams
Greenwood High School

Drunk driving is an obscure problem that has turned into an epidemic. In a small city such as Bowling Green, every loss of life is felt by the community. However none hit as hard as a teenager killed because of drunk driving. The entire community will have to work together if we are to rid our city of this problem.

The main message I would want to convey is that driving drunk is dangerous and can even be deadly. I would state that drunk driving could ruin your life and is not a smart choice. I would also talk about the consequences of driving drunk. Such as hurting yourself, your friends or family, and innocent strangers. Also, driving drunk can get you into serious trouble.

While I would want to inform the community as a whole of the dangers of drunk driving, I would focus the majority of my efforts on young teenagers and college students between the ages of fifteen and twenty. I would also make the parents with teens in that group aware of the underage drunk driving. Older young adults, over the drinking age, who could influence this group with their actions should be made aware, too. I would also talk to school personnel, like teachers and principals, and ask if they could help spread the message that drunk driving is dangerous. Another group I would notify of this pandemic is the people in the community that sell alcohol and who may sell it to minors. They should know that they are helping to aid the problem.

As far as suggestions to help the problem go, I have several. First, I would suggest that stricter laws be imposed for underage drunk drivers. Next, I would say that when a teenager is caught drunk driving, their license should be revoked and suspended for two years. During those two years, the teens should have to attend mandatory classes about drunk driving dangers and how to avoid them. Also, I believe that older young adults should be asked to volunteer to mentor younger teens who were caught about not driving drunk. Another suggestion I have is to show an educational movie about drunk driving in high school driver's education classes. This movie should be up to date and made in a way that high school students can relate to and understand it.

If underage drunk driving is ever to be stamped out completely, the entire community needs to work together. Teenagers need to be informed of the dangers of drunk driving. They need responsible people from the community that they can trust to tell them about driving drunk. While there are many suggestions that can be made, but none of them will help until they have been carried out.

Jonathan Bromer
Greenwood High School

Drunk driving is a problem far beyond the personal level; it affects every single person. Since there is such a large audience to reach, I will use the help of organizations already in place to facilitate my message of, "it's not cool to be a fool!" Though this message will be aimed at high school students, its depth will reach to all who hear. High school students are the target audience due to the fact that during those years, many teenagers are first exposed to alcohol. Only when a problem such as this is faced at its very source can the greatest amount of impact be had.

The Fellowship of Christian Athletes (FCA) presents a unique opportunity for the message of "It's not cool to be a fool!" to be promoted. A number of different factors make this group the best mode of promotion: the organization shares the same morals as the slogan (i.e. The group is pre-disposed against drinking), there is an established FCA in each high school, FCA would have the backing of its supporting churches, and the organization is a great avenue to finding student-athletes and role models for this message. As a member of the FCA, I would first promote the campaign against drunk driving in my own school. This would begin to reach the target audience, high school students. With the help of club sponsors, each high school's FCA would be brought on board gradually expanding the message's scope of impact. The next step is to reach beyond the FCA to the entire high school student body.

After all FCA groups have been made aware of this message, each club will take this message to the streets. The club will make posters and banners to be placed in all local businesses. Students will write, edit, and produce 15-second public service announcements to be aired on local TV and radio stations. Press releases will be sent out about the supported message to local newspapers and radio stations. This would prompt more interviews and publicity all revolving around that same true message. As publicity of this nature can get quite costly, the FCA will seek the support of local alcohol retailers to sponsor this campaign.

The final activity that I would develop would be to organize police presentations in area middle schools. The consequences of drunk driving would be discussed as well as providing visual demonstrations that prove just how impaired a person is under the influence of alcohol.

By now, high school students will clearly see the importance of this message, while being flooded with the same message from all sides; at school, at home, and even in the car. Establishments that indirectly supply youth with their alcohol are voicing their support against drunk driving, too! By now, high school students cannot escape the fact that this message is true, and that it truly is not cool to be a fool.

Nathaniel Settle
Greenwood High School

If I were given the task to organize and work with people from the community one important message I would want to communicate would be that driving drunk doesn't just affect you, it affects everyone around you. I would want this message to be told to young adults and teens. Drunk driving is an ongoing problem and it appears to be on the rise. Many times I think that when teenagers choose to drink and then drive, they believe that it is their choice and if something happens it will be to them and no one else. If more time and energy were put into preventing drunk driving it wouldn't happen. The community as a whole is responsible for educating the youth of today about serious issues. This is one issue that has been neglected in some ways. Students aren't well informed about what can happen when they get behind the wheel of a car intoxicated. Something that I think should be implemented into schools is a presentation of real stories of teens who have made the choice to drink and drive. They should show the real consequences of what happens and the punishment that is given. As far as the laws that are now in effect, they aren't enough. Teens who are underage and caught drinking should have their licenses taken away and given some form of community service. They should also be taught why they are wrong in drinking and driving. Just punishing them won't help. They need to be educated about how dangerous driving while intoxicated can be. If people in the community, along with religious leaders, the police, and students, came together to combat the issue of drunk driving more teens would be informed of the dangers involved.

Laura Newton
Greenwood High School

One of the major concerns in most communities in the United States is drunk driving by minors and young adults. Since Bowling Green is a college town, the problem is significantly increased due to the large percentage of young adults. Although the police force and other members of the community put forth great efforts to try to reduce the problem of drunk driving, there is still more that should be done to combat this issue. In order to considerably decrease the concerns of this matter, the source from which minors receive their alcohol should be targeted and education concerning alcohol use needs to be further implemented so that young people will have a greater understanding of how to take responsibility for their actions.

The problem of drunk driving begins when minors have access to alcoholic beverages. Despite the fact that individuals under the age of twenty-one are prohibited from purchasing alcohol, minors have little difficulty accessing the substance. The police in the community and workers at liquor stores typically prevent youngsters from purchasing alcohol, but the policy of checking everyone's identification when purchasing alcohol needs to continue to be stressed. However, the primary source from which minors obtain alcohol is from older friends, siblings, and other family members of age. Harsher laws for individuals who supply minors with alcohol should be put into action.

Teachers, religious leaders, and others in the community who are responsible for educating teenagers about alcohol should go about teaching in a different way. In most public schools and places of worship, teens are taught only about abstinence of alcohol. After being educated in this manner about alcohol, most teens do not know anything except that any drinking is frowned upon. A majority of teenagers do not even know the specific laws concerning underage drinking and driving or the true consequences of alcohol abuse.

Although minors should definitely not use alcohol, only in a perfect, utopian society will all teenagers refrain from drinking. Therefore educators should acknowledge this fact and alter their methods of teaching accordingly. They should not give the impression that alcohol use is the same as abuse or exaggerate the dangers of consumption. By overstressing the effects of alcohol in hopes of scaring teenagers from using it, teenagers receive a jaded view of the dangers of alcohol. Instead, religious leaders and teachers should truthfully inform students of the effects of alcohol and the community laws concerning underage drinking and driving.

By restricting minors' access to alcohol and by increasing and altering the education concerning alcohol consumption, drinking and driving by young adults and those who are underage age can be significantly decreased. Everyone in the community including policemen, business owners, teachers, religious leaders, and parents need to work together to fight the issue of young drunk drivers on the road. However, the ultimate responsibility lies with the young people, and by following the suggestions outlined, drunk driving by young adults and those who are underage can hopefully be decreased.

Lacey Goodhue
Warren East High School

Drunk driving by those who are underage, and by young adults, is an ongoing problem in our community. In order to combat this issue, underage drivers, young adults, parents, the community, business and religious leaders and the police are going to have to work together. Young people need the guidance of those individuals that they look up to and these individuals MUST take the time, pay attention to, and help them with the increasingly rising problem.

When we are born, our parents are our care givers, our teachers, our leaders, our trainers, and our mentors. Training a child starts at home and parents are going to have to give us more of their time. Teenagers, more than ever, need their parents' guidance and leadership. Parents with an attitude of "I don't have time" or "maybe later" are going to have to change if teenagers are going to change.

Parents, teachers, community, business and religious leaders are going to have to teach us the dangers of drinking alcohol and driving an automobile. Parents are going to have to get involved and stay involved. There are numerous ways in which these individuals can help teenagers and young adults if they just take the time. One way to start educating teenagers is to require them to take alcohol awareness programs and transportation education classes in middle school and again in high school. Also, teenagers who were victims of tragic drunk driving accidents should continuously share their stories with students in high schools parents must stay involved and constantly keep the lines of communication open.

Furthermore, automobile manufacturers should create a monitor that can be installed in every automobile that is driven by teenagers limiting their speed to 45 MPH. Also, legislators should lobby for a law that will raise the legal drinking age from 21 to 23 years of age. Legislators should also lobby for a curfew of twelve midnight for all teens. Laws should be changed to punish teens, under the age of 21, that commit a DUI, so that they lose their drivers license for 6 months. Further, legislation needs to be passed with stronger penalties and huge fines for establishments that are caught providing potential underage purchasers with alcohol. Law enforcements need to step-up sobriety checkpoints and enforce curfews.

In summary, parents, teachers, community, business and religious leaders and the police are going to have to work together to educate teenagers and young adults about the horrors of drunk driving. Parents have to be at the front of the line and take the lead to teach us and stay involved. After all, young people need the guidance of the individuals that they look up to and these individuals MUST take the time, pay attention to, and help educate them about drunk driving.

Sarah Pierce
Bowling Green High School

Drunk driving has become a huge issue in the city of Bowling Green alone. Being in high school has affected my outlook on drunk driving tremendously. I cannot believe that so many people would be stupid enough to get into the drivers seat of a car after drinking a half a case of beer or a pint of liquor. Even after some people's best friends almost die because of an accident that has to do with drunk driving, they continue to drive drunk knowing the consequences. Something must be done about this. With the help of the whole city maybe we can put an end to drunk driving.

In the schools system, corporate leaders who have had DUI should be able to come and talk to students about drunk driving. Through the eyes of someone that knows what a DUI charge is like the students can get a better understanding then a police officer that comes in. Also, when dealing with a party that may have underage drinking going on the police should block off the exits before busting a party. By stopping those from leaving the sight they might be able to save a life. A large majority of teenage drunk driving comes for the fleeing of a party scene or after a party.

I believe that Tennessee has adopted a wonderful program. By implementing shame to a drunk driver it may reduce them drinking and driving again. While drunk drivers do community service they must wear a shirt that says, "I am a drunk driver." Other consequences entail a hefty fine and jail time that we already have. The penalty for repeat drunk driving for three DUI's should be a class D felony. There is no reason if you are going through treatment that it should happen more than once. Yet, we the Commonwealth of Kentucky give drunk driver's four chances. It should be three strikes and you're out.

There are many drunk drivers out there and our community must pull together to save lives. By implementing these laws and punishments into our system I believe that we could reduce the amount of people drinking and driving tremendously. These are only a few things but with everyone's help we can make the city of Bowling Green a safer place.

Brittney Gorman
Bowling Green High School

The problem with drunk driving is continually becoming a large issue in communities across America. Because I have been selected to organize a committee of my classmates to work with members of the community, I have decided that the best way to inform the public of the dangers of drunk driving is by making them aware.

I would want my classmates and I to work with members of my community such as police, business men and women, and religious leaders to help educate people of all ages to resist drunk driving. I would want the communication of this information to be presented to parents and teenagers mostly. Power point presentations would be one good way to present the information and statistics of drunk driving. Teens should be aware of the ramifications of driving under the influence of alcohol. In Kentucky, there is a minimum of a \$200 fine, 48 hours or 30 days in jail, at least 48 hours of community service, possible suspension of a license, and possibly have alcohol assessment and treatment for 90 days. Teens need to realize that drunk driving is not only harmful to them and others, it is also a crime. The message that I would want teenagers and their parents to receive is that they have a bright future ahead of them. Driving under the influence of alcohol can pay a part in ruining their future. Not only are they endangering their own lives, but the lives of innocent others.

Drunk driving awareness is not only for teenagers, college students and even adults are sometimes guilty of making poor decisions while intoxicated. I believe that religious leaders and business men and women could connect better with adults than the police would. Presenting the information would be as easy as a speech by an influential person in the community. The message that would be most received if the message that was given was that of self-discipline and self-respect.

I do agree with most of the laws that are in existence today about drunk driving in Kentucky. If I could change any existing laws, I would make the punishment for repeat offenders much stricter. I also believe that teens should have a harsh punishment. Teenagers should not be drinking in the first place, it is illegal after all. Then I don't think that the punishment for teens when they are caught drunk driving is harsh enough. Teens that are caught should have to do at least 30 days of community service, on top of a license suspension and spending the night in jail.

I think that MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) should be more involved in schools with presentation to make kids aware. School systems in America should be more active in preventing the drunk driving epidemic.

In conclusion, I think that drunk driving is a terrible crime that is very preventable. Every person in the community has a responsibility to try and prevent this awful crime.

Mary Tinnon
Bowling Green High School

Where on their list of priorities do most people place the issue drunk driving? It's not hard to determine that answer when looking at statistics. One person will die about every 32 minutes in the United States because of drunk driving. In the year 2004 alone, there were nearly 1.4 million drivers arrested for driving under the influence. Should these facts representing the most privileged and well-educated country in the world? Most would agree that, no, they should not be. There are many ways that we can reduce drunk driving related accidents and fatalities.

We need to teach the effects of driving under the influence at a younger age. Young children growing up many not attend a school where they are taught about alcohol and the effects it has on your body and your ability to drive. When adolescents reach high school and begin to get their driver's licenses, they should be required to learn real life accounts of how drinking and driving can change your life forever. Many teens are naïve on the subject and better education could possibly help lower the chance of them getting behind the wheel after consuming alcoholic beverages.

Stricter punishment for drunk driving under the influence now will usually (but not always) go to jail, and face fines along with losing points off the license. The drunk driving rate across Europe, however, is significantly lower than that of the United States. Drivers caught drinking at Blood Alcohol Level of as low as .05 are immediately arrested and put in jail. Highway traffic monitors and road safety campaigns have left European nations much safer. These are changes that the United States could make in the effort to crack down on the problem.

More alternatives should be provided for those that have had a little to drink and do not want to get behind the wheel. Of course, in some places, there are services such as the "Designated Driver" and "Yellow Cab," but these should be more widely available. Most of the time, people leaving bars and parties would rather not drive. The main reason they choose to drive after drinking is because they think they have no alternative. If those were more options for these people, then we could save more lives by simply providing rides to where they need to go. Jobs are in demand as is this type of service so, it is a win-win situation.

After evaluation the problem of drunk driving, I think most people in our nation would agree that there are many different solutions to the increasing problem of drunk driving, including adding new laws and stricter laws on the matter, more strict enforcement of existing laws, and simply providing more forms of public transportation for those under the influence of alcohol. Drunk driving *can* be prevented with the help of all citizens both young and old, community and religious leaders, and law enforcement.