

# Editorial

## It isn't working

In the Quakertown area, we have tried with great effort, especially in the educational community, to drive home the fact that drinking is a negative behavior that should be avoided by kids. We have also made it clear that, at all cost, they should not drink and drive, or *get in the car* with someone who is drinking and driving.

We are sure these efforts have made some kind of impact. Who knows how many young people have been saved by them? At least we hope so, because after May 11 it feels a little like we've been hitting a brick wall.

Quakertown had a tragedy early in the morning of that day, when four of its upperclassmen, with an opened case of beer in their car, slammed into some trees, injuring one of them severely. The injured passenger was one of the district's shining stars athletically; now he faces a tough battle after breaking his neck and undergoing surgery to repair it.

Most people who know these kids are absolutely shocked that they would have gotten themselves in this horrific situation. They're good kids, they say.

But, as Quakertown school superintendent James Scanlon said, "Sometimes good kids make bad decisions."

Our question is, how do we stop that? What more can we do? Are we doing something wrong?

When "good" kids are willing to get in a car on a Saturday night and drink beer, something needs to be cranked up a notch.

Are our kids not taking the district and community's anti-drinking (and driving) campaign seriously because they think we aren't? Let's face it, most parents of children in high school, even model parents today, had their wild youth days, at a time when drinking and driving weren't considered so bad. Are we sending a mixed subconscious message?

Do our children see us go out for drinks and dinner and still get behind the wheel? Do we allow them to attend parties where alcohol is served even though they are under-aged? A Healthy Communities-Health Youth survey revealed alcohol is a real problem with Quakertown area youth, partly because parents are not supporting efforts to curb drinking out of school.

The Quakertown Community School District has many programs in place to battle drinking and driving, especially around prom time in May. It's ironic that this accident occurred around that time; let's hope it helps to save other lives.

So far, acting out drinking and driving tragedies (during prom week) doesn't seem to be stopping dangerous behavior. Having a smashed car sitting on the front lawn of the school isn't making a big enough impact. Neither is the efforts of the group – Students Against Dangerous Decisions. Neighbor to Neighbor, in which households pledge not to allow drinking in their homes when children are present, is an excellent idea, but parents must take those pledges seriously, and more must be recruited. The Healthy Communities-Healthy Youth initiative needs to make alcohol and drug use a priority issue because clearly it is preventing far too many young people from excelling. It is one of our youth's biggest destroyers, negatively affecting kids from all kinds of families.

But will any efforts ever be enough? Or is it just the fact that alcohol is the “not so forbidden” fruit in our society, and as long as it is around, it will be used, and abused, especially by the young, who consider themselves invincible in both the drinking and driving arenas? Will the problem always remain because kids would rather listen to other kids than their teachers and parents?

Obviously, we can't just give up. All we can do is step up the education (Psychologically, what reaches kids the best?) and ask for parental support. All the education in the world is not going to be successful if parents don't model that education. We must remember, as parents we are the students' biggest models, whether they know it or not.

Our thoughts go out to the parents and students involved in the latest tragedy. If only we knew this would be the last one.