April 6-18, National Crime Victims’ Memorial Week

RIDLEY alerts Doris Aiken that Spring has sprung. I am relieved that there were no alcohol-related highway fatalities last year in Schenectady County, N.Y. and none so far to date. The huge problem of underage drinking, leading to AOD (alcohol overdose) and serious, permanent bodily injury and addiction is rampant. The pictures here reflect the effect of death and permanent injury from AOD and DWI.

Scott Krueger (18) died September 29th, 1997 in Cambridge, MA. A short time before his death, he moved to his off-campus fraternity house (Phi Gamma Delta).

After his initiation, he collapsed due to AOD (alcohol over dose) and was carried to the basement of the fraternity house, and left to sleep it off. He died after his frat brothers found him comatose, and called for medical help. Scott’s BAC was reported to be .41.

Scott was an outstanding high school student in mathematics and sports. He had every capability to succeed. The attending doctor at the hospital obtained a copy of the RID video “Without Warning” to train hospitals and students about the signs of AOD as well as the vital response to the signs Call 911 immediately to take the AOD victim to the closest hospital to help save the victim’s life. In Scott’s case, he died.

A dozen other people were discovered passed out alongside ER to help save the victim’s life. In Scott’s case, he died. 911 immediately to take the AOD victim to the closest hospital.

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Every year, there are between 55,000-80,000 people in the U.S. who are sent to the emergency rooms from an acetaminophen overdose. Of that number, at least 500 people are killed according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Food and Drug Administration.

Lee Rottenberg, a DWI Victim for life, takes a leading role in public education for youth and serves on the local education Boards on Long Island NY as the speaker for RID. But in the case of alcohol there are no warnings on alcohol labels to alert drinkers of its potentially fatal use, even though alcohol’s impact is far worse than Tylenol. According to the CDC (Center for Disease Control), there are approximately 88,000 deaths attributable to excessive alcohol use each year in the United States. This makes excessive alcohol use the 3rd leading lifestyle-related cause of death for the nation according to JAMA (the Journal of American Medical Association). Alcohol abuse is responsible for 2.5 million years of potential life lost (YPLL) annually, or an average of about 30 years of potential life lost for each death (CDC).

This example of a cover up is created by the tremendous influence the alcohol industry has everywhere from the Food and Drug Administration to the Federal Communication Commission to the members of Congress. In Canada, for example, the calories and warnings of over drinking are part of the alcohol industry’s alcohol mandate that calories and alerts appear on all alcohol labels.
RID reached out to three different victims of alcohol-impaired drivers to address the issue of closure. What we learned is that attaining closure for them is an extremely difficult process that is never fulfilled.

Linda Campion’s daughter Kathleen died in March of 1989 when she was hit by an alcohol-impaired driver in Saratoga County. Linda feels the use of the term closure is insulting to many victims she has come to know over the past 25 years. She writes this: “Closure is a word used by those who hope that if they were ever placed in a similar situation of losing a loved one to an alcohol-impaired driver, that there will be closures of some kind.”

Yet, Linda has taken her anger and channeled it into positive action. She and her family founded the Kathleen A. Campion Foundation to spread awareness of the dangers of drinking and driving. She has advocated for and improved victims’ rights in the court of law. While she may never find closure, Linda has turned her loss into the motivating factor for prevention and education so others won’t have to experience the devastation of losing a loved one to drunk driving.

Jared Spinoa lost his companion, Laurie Tavares to a drunk driver on November 27, 2003. Jared suffered through a litany of emotions First, Shock as he couldn’t believe that this amazing person he had come to love was gone and their future together was stolen by a drunk driver. Then depression came as he spent the first couple of months sleeping more than he ever had in his life. The worst emotion for Jared was regret to which he struggles with to this day.

Jared found some relief from his pain when he attended the trial of the defendant. He viewed him a pathetic human being. While he could feel bad for him, he can’t forgive him for what the drunk driver took from him and Laurie’s family. The anxiety this tragedy has brought upon Jared is the only lingering emotion that he feels just as strong as he did ten years ago. Jared writes: “If there is one piece of advice I could give anyone coping with a sudden, tragic loss of a loved one it would be to seek others who had the same experience. I spent weeks being counseled by friends and family all of whom had loved ones, but none of them experienced losing someone so close, so sudden and so tragic. I have been through both and I promise there is a HUGE difference! I wasn’t the only one with those regrets. That was the most helpful thing I did that helped me cope and find some closure. You must seek others out who have experienced the same as you, so you may learn that you are not alone.”

35 years ago, Bill DiKant lost his first wife and two of their children when a drunk driver plowed into their vehicle, killing the drunk driver as well. Bill has been a forerunning advocate to get drunk drivers off the road ever since. His tireless energy spirited message as a motivational speaker has been heard by thousands of convicted drunk drivers covering four counties in the Capital region. He also spreads his message about the hazards of drunk driving to school children. Bill Writes: First off it was how to deal with this; I lost my wife and daughter, then I had to decide to take my oldest son of life support, what’s to become of my youngest son? I’m being driven to frustration because of selfishness and greed. I’m thankful that the man (drunk driver) died. I kept thinking on how should I get even with him? There is no closure on this; it continues to be with me. I re-married and my wife was an EMT with the local ambulance, so I joined to assist the community. I made contact with Remove Intoxicated Drivers and did what I could to help them. I also try to speak to other Victims’ of these domestic terrorists trying to encourage them in dealing with this “Non Violent” crime as stated by the Second Court Circuit.”

I would like to thank Linda Campion, Jared Spinoa and Bill DiKant for sharing their thoughts and experiences in such a poignant manner. Please go to our web page, www.rid-usa.org and click on the link, Finding Closure in aid your comments and feedback.

*Source: Andrew Welsh-Huggins, Associated Press September 13, 2013