

FEATURED LETTER

Make the holidays safe and sober on New Jersey roads

The partners in EmPoWER Somerset include Prosecutor Geoffrey Soriano, Sheriff Frank Provenzano and all the police chiefs in Somerset County. The group hopes all are recovering from the devastating superstorm Sandy. Emergency service personnel worked around the clock during that dangerous storm and continued to help in its aftermath. We are proud of the work they did, and sincerely hope you join us in applauding them.

We now are in the holiday season, with the desire to make it as safe as possible. EmPoWER Somerset would like to remind everyone to enjoy each other's company by drinking responsibly or, better yet, if you have to drive, do not drink alcoholic beverages at all.

We know New Year's Eve is a well-known night for underage drinking. Statistics show that teens usually interact with other teens who are within three years of their age. This puts the 18-year-olds at risk of hanging around with someone who is 21 and can legally purchase alcoholic beverages.

The people at EmPoWER Somerset ask that you take the time before the holidays to talk to your children about their plans, and specifically make sure that they do not include alcoholic beverages. Parents have a responsibility to know their children's plans and to check when they come home at night to make sure they have not been drinking.

Whether you are going out or having company over your house, make sure there is a sober driver if alcoholic beverages are part of the menu.

EmPoWER Somerset's "Ride Home 2Nite" program offers local taxi services to get you or a loved one home safe. Make sure your children have taxi money and know where to reach you if they find themselves in a situation where their friend, the driver, has been drinking and the best course of action is a safe ride home.

This year, we are collaborating with the HERO campaign. The HERO campaign encourages a person to volunteer to be a sober driver for the group. Liquor establishments that participate in the program offer free soft drinks for the designated driver. Bill and Muriel Elliott, parents of Ensign John Elliott, established the HERO Campaign. In 2001, New Jersey adopted "John's Law," named in honor of Elliott, which requires police to impound cars of drunken drivers for up to 12 hours.

Arrest and having your car impounded is not the way any of us want you to spend this New Year's Eve or any other time of the year. Please join us in our attempt to keep our roadways safe. Develop a plan now that discourages drinking and driving.



Scan this QR code with your smartphone for a list of taxi services in Somerset County.

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The writer is president of the Somerset County Association of Chiefs of Police.