

FEATURED LETTER

Underage drinking often has serious consequences

The holiday season is a very joyous time. Family and friends both distant and close reunite to celebrate together. We are all reminded how important our loved ones are to us. It is a time to celebrate and regroup.

With all celebrations comes a great responsibility, especially when alcohol is involved. Alcohol consumption usually rises during the holiday season. It is a commonplace factor in most celebrations. Even when alcohol is enjoyed responsibly and legally, the potential for tragedy is always present.

Individuals under the age of 21 must realize that alcohol consumption, despite its presence at many family gatherings, is extremely dangerous, and the consequences of underage consumption are statistically more deadly and tragic.

As sheriff of Somerset County, I am encouraging all family members who have children and young adults to prevent their loved ones from drinking alcoholic beverages. According to the Health Control Alliance (2012), more than half of young adults report getting alcohol from parents, guardians, other family members, or unrelated adults. This should resonate with parents with respect to the important role they play in keeping their loved ones safe.



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

Parents need to be consistent in their message to their children about the dangers of alcohol. Brain development continues into one's early 20s, and alcohol can cause severe damage. Taking into consideration all of the risks associated with underage drinking, it truly is a "no brainer" to refrain from underage drinking.

I remain committed to assisting law enforcement efforts to thwart underage drinking and drunken driving. In 2012, the sheriff's office joined in a countywide designated-driver program known as the HERO campaign.

The HERO campaign is a partnership between local businesses and law enforcement to encourage the use of a designated driver. In some instances, local businesses will provide incentives to individuals that pledge to drive a friend home that has been drinking alcohol. The HERO program is a result of a grass-roots effort started by the parents of a young Naval Academy ensign who was tragically killed by a drunk driver at the age of 22.

As we all can see, the consequences of drinking and driving are real. Every effort must be taken to prevent tragedy. Please be mindful of how precious life is as we celebrate the upcoming holidays and be responsible. Enjoy the holidays.

Frank J. Provenzano
SHERIFF
SOMERSET COUNTY