



YME(S)

Youth Educating for Safety





Youth Educating for Safety

What's inside:

Speaking up about DWI..... 3
Lights, Camera, Action
A look at WNYE's Teen Talk TV..... 4-5
Choices..... 6
Over the Limit: Facts on Speeding... 7
Driver Distraction..... 8
Pedestrian Safety, A Comic..... 9
Family Life Theatre..... 10-11
Puzzle Page..... 12
Check Myself..... 13
Effects of Alcohol Consumption..... 14-15
Poetry..... 16
To my son 17
Soundbites 18
Use Your Brain:
Information on Bike Helmets..... 19
Answers..... Back

Published by the New York City Department of Transportation Safety Education Office, in cooperation with the New York City Department of Education. Production of YES is supported by NHTSA with a grant from the NYS Governor's Traffic Safety Committee, the NYC STOP-DWI program and Traffic Safety for NYC, Inc.

NYC Department of Transportation
Office of Safety Education
59 Maiden Lane 35th floor, New York, NY 10038
Executive Director: Ilona Lubman, Ph.D.
Deputy Director: Theresa Barry
Assistant Director: Marjorie Marciano
Art Director: Yuan Hsuan-Ping
Graphic Artist: Rosalyn Brown
Junior High School Coordinator: Cheryl Johnson
High School Coordinator/Project Director: Michelle Kaucic

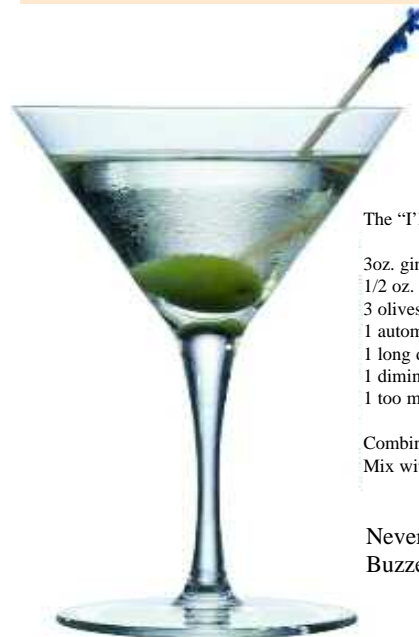
Dear Readers,

We've had the privilege of meeting and speaking with many NYC students in recent semesters. Through in-class workshops, assemblies, Family Life Theatre performances, and Kings County District Attorney's Choices and Consequences programs, we've seen and heard your response to issues of safety and decision making.

This magazine is dedicated to your responses! The idea of YES (Youth Educating for Safety) is to give students a forum for expressing their thoughts, feelings and beliefs about important safety topics. This magazine will continue to grow and improve with your submissions. Each edition will be created by you! The readers are teenagers like you!

We enthusiastically welcome your stories, poems, essays, songs, and artwork about traffic safety.

Please send submissions to:
NYCDOT Safety Education
YES Magazine
59 Maiden Lane 35th floor
New York, NY 10038
Or e-mail: yesmagazine@dot.nyc.gov



The "I'll Just Have One More" Martini

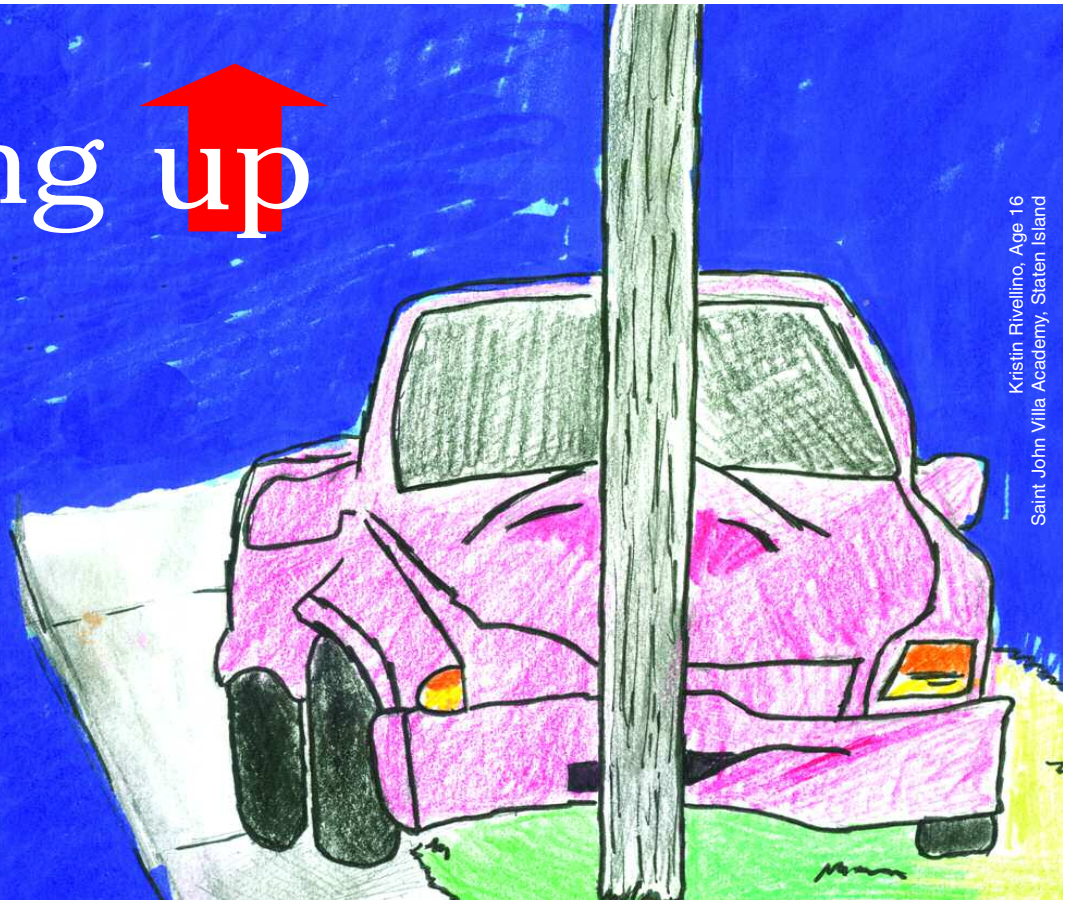
- 3oz. gin or vodka
1/2 oz. dry vermouth
3 olives
1 automobile
1 long day
1 diminished attention span
1 too many

Combine ingredients. Drink. Repeat.
Mix with sharp turn, telephone pole.

Never underestimate "just a few"
Buzzed driving is drunk driving.



speaking up about dwi



Kristin Rivellino, Age 16
Saint John Villa Academy, Staten Island

I can keep myself and others safe by...

"Watching how much they drink and stopping them from driving while intoxicated."

-Ashley, DeWitt Clinton High School, Bronx

"Not going in a car with a drunk driver and to always wear my seatbelt whenever I am in a car."

-Radia, DeWitt Clinton High School, Bronx

"Not drinking and driving... protecting myself and others when we are in the car."

-Tiffany, City As School, Brooklyn

"When a person offers you a ride and they seem intoxicated, make an excuse like, I have to meet someone here or just say NO!"

-Kaezia, DeWitt Clinton High School, Bronx

"Suggesting if we're going to do any drinking, do it at home. That way, no one gets hurt... Spend the night at a friend's house."

-Jalicia, City As School, Brooklyn

"Not being impaired and staying out of vehicles with impaired people."

-Joey, DeWitt Clinton High School, Bronx

"Not driving while under the influence; taking public transportation instead. Saying no and taking some action when I have to, even though I may get in trouble."

-Saira, Townsend Harris High School, Queens

Something I might tell a friend about DWI is...

"That it is dangerous and it's not a joke. It's not worth it."

-Cesar, DeWitt Clinton High School, Bronx

"It's dangerous and definitely not worth it! It doesn't make you any cooler if you're drunk. Plus, alcohol tastes bad- so what are the benefits of drinking and driving? None."

-Nicole, Townsend Harris High School, Queens

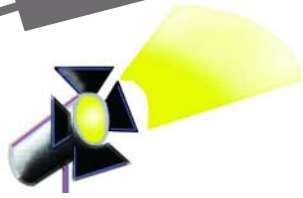
"Don't drive under the influence of alcohol or drugs. You might feel sober, but you're not. It puts you in a place where you can do stupid things."

-Maya, DeWitt Clinton High School, Bronx

"That it could cost them their life."

-Marian, DeWitt Clinton High School, Bronx

LIGHTS CAMERA ACTION!



students tackle tough topics on W N Y E Teen Talk TV

The student interns of WNYE brainstormed and came up with a number of ideas for their shows. They chose the topic of impaired driving by unanimous vote in the hopes of making teens more aware. This show, entitled The Final Drive, focused on the topic of driving while intoxicated from a number of perspectives. This is a change for Teen Talk TV, a program that generally features the light and fun aspects of being a teenager such as fashion and music.

This show proved to be a very compelling, informative and emotional experience for the audience. The guests were examples of individuals with the power to make change; from a personal choice of not using drugs and alcohol to educating others in the community and even changing laws. Thanks to Teen Talk TV for sharing the message!



THE SET OF WNYE'S TEEN TALK TV

part 1



Special Guest: Rochelle Roberts

Following a few words from the hosts, Monique Dixon is introduced as the show's first guest. Dixon is the mother of Vasean Alleyne, an 11 year old who was killed by a drunk driver on October 22, 2004. Dixon carefully describes the details of the incident for the audience: John Wirta barreling down the block, finding out that her son had passed away and learning that his friend Angel was in a coma that would last eight days. "I couldn't believe this was happening. It was like a nightmare had begun and I couldn't wake up," Dixon recalls. As the legal proceedings began, Dixon began to realize that there was no law "to cover what this man had done". Unfortunately driving while intoxicated wasn't enough; there were no factors that could support a manslaughter charge. At sentencing, Wirta would receive 60 days in prison, as well as community service and probation. It was then that Dixon made the conscious decision to go to the people who made these laws. "I learned the law so I could speak the law. I wanted to carry knowledge, not just anger," Dixon states. Monique spoke and law makers listened. In 2005, Vasean's Law was enacted.

If you are driving while intoxicated or impaired by a drug and are involved in a collision in which another person is seriously injured or killed, you may face felony assault or homicide charges and up to 7 years in jail. Vasean's Law, enacted on June 3, 2005

part 2

The next guest introduced is Rochelle Roberts. She is a bright and insightful young woman who has, unfortunately, lost many friends and loved ones in crashes. She tells the audience about July 12th. Her friends were coming back from a party. The driver had been drinking. Roberts learned of her friends' deaths, but did not know the cause until the next day. "I was surprised and hurt," Roberts recounts, "I didn't know who to blame".

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for youth ages 16 to 20. More than a third of teen deaths are caused by motor vehicle crashes.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

This is only one of several crashes and preventable incidents that have taken the lives of seventeen people Roberts knew and loved. This prompted the teen to participate in The Allstate Foundation's Teen Advisory Panel. "When I found out how many teens are effected by drunk driving, I was shocked and I wanted to get the word out," Roberts tells the audience.

part 3

Next, we are introduced to Austin, a young man whose last name remains anonymous. Austin uses his experience as a recovering addict to encourage teens to avoid using drugs and alcohol. "I had many battles," Austin tells us, "crack, weed, alcohol, pcp and I am fortunate to have not gotten arrested or killed anyone." Austin discusses his experience getting behind the wheel while under the influence. "It's a part of the disease," he says "You think it's not a big deal because your head is cloudy from using. It shows lack of thought resulting in poor choices." Now clean and sober, and working to stay that way, Austin is sharing his story to help teens and young adults stay clean or get help if they need it.



The Hosts: Tahrrike & Tanie

**the hosts:
Tahrrike & Tanie**

The hosts, Tanie Bonaventure and Tahrrike Nelson wrap up the show. The cameras are off; however, the discussion isn't over. The audience has a lot of questions about making the right choices when faced with using drugs and alcohol and about being responsible behind the wheel. There are also questions about surviving the death of a loved one and about legal consequences for poor choices. The audience enthusiastically admires Monique Dixon and she encourages them, "You, as an individual can make a change in any area you see fit," she asserts.

"The Final Drive" initially aired June 23, 2006 at 5:00 PM E.S.T. on WNYE.

CHOICES

“Now, it was time for me to face the consequences of my selfish choices...”

I got my license at eighteen years old. After only two years, my license was revoked for getting three speeding tickets in eighteen months. Being foolish, I continued driving. Any reason I give would just be a cheap way of trying to justify my inexcusable actions. It was not until five years later that I truly understood the repercussions of driving without a license.

One evening my girlfriend, her sister and I went to get ice cream. Once we had gotten to the main avenue, I had exceeded the thirty mile per hour speed limit and was traveling at fifty miles per hour. I was now just seconds away from changing the lives of people I had never met.

As I approached the intersection, I saw a man trying to cross the street. Thinking I could pass the man without a problem, I continued to speed. Then, the unimaginable happened. I struck the man with the passenger side of my car. He came up on the hood and through the windshield. At this point, I panicked and made a critical mistake. I left the scene.

Two weeks later I was caught. Now, it was time for me to face the consequences of my selfish choices. I had to appear in court and face the family of the man whom I had killed. To see the pain on their faces and know that I had caused their suffering was unbearable. A family now has to live their lives in misery because of a choice that I made.

I was sentenced to six months in jail, five years probation, 325 hours of community service, and five years without a license, which is a light sentence for taking a man's life and ruining the lives of several others.

I served time on Riker's Island where I was told what, when and how to do everyday things. I was subjected to searches at any given time. I learned very quickly how priceless my freedom was.



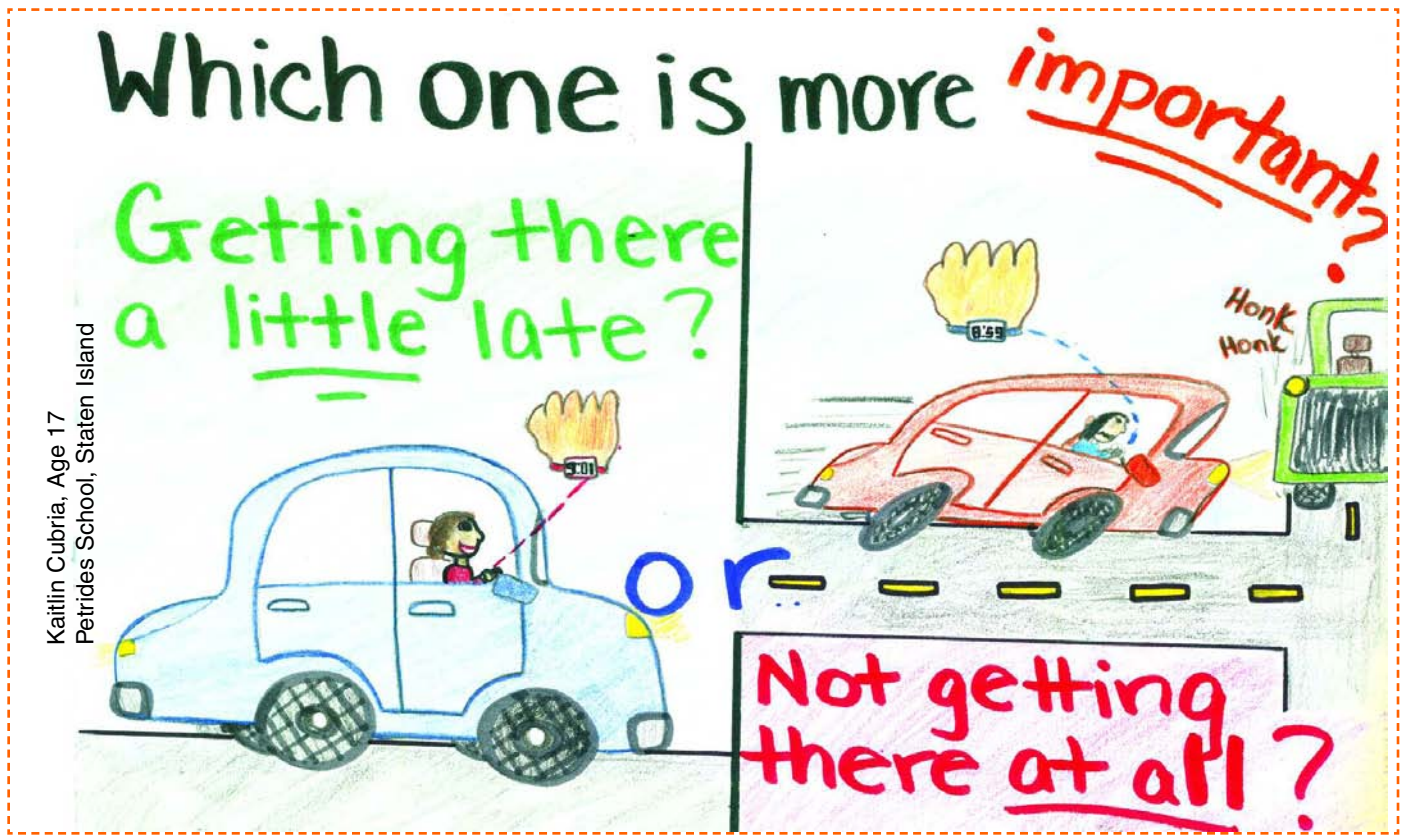
The one thing that you haven't heard me say was that I was drinking or doing drugs. I was sober, and yet this horrific incident took place.

We all have choices to make in life, but almost never stop to think of the consequences. If I had made the right choices, then an innocent man and his family would be together right now. Knowing I took a life and destroyed a family will live with me forever.

All of this was preventable and avoidable.

Driving is a privilege, not a right. Remember you always have a choice... make it a wise one.

-Anonymous



over the limit

Speeding is a factor in 30 percent of all fatal crashes.

About 1,000 fatalities result from speeding-related motor vehicle crashes every month.

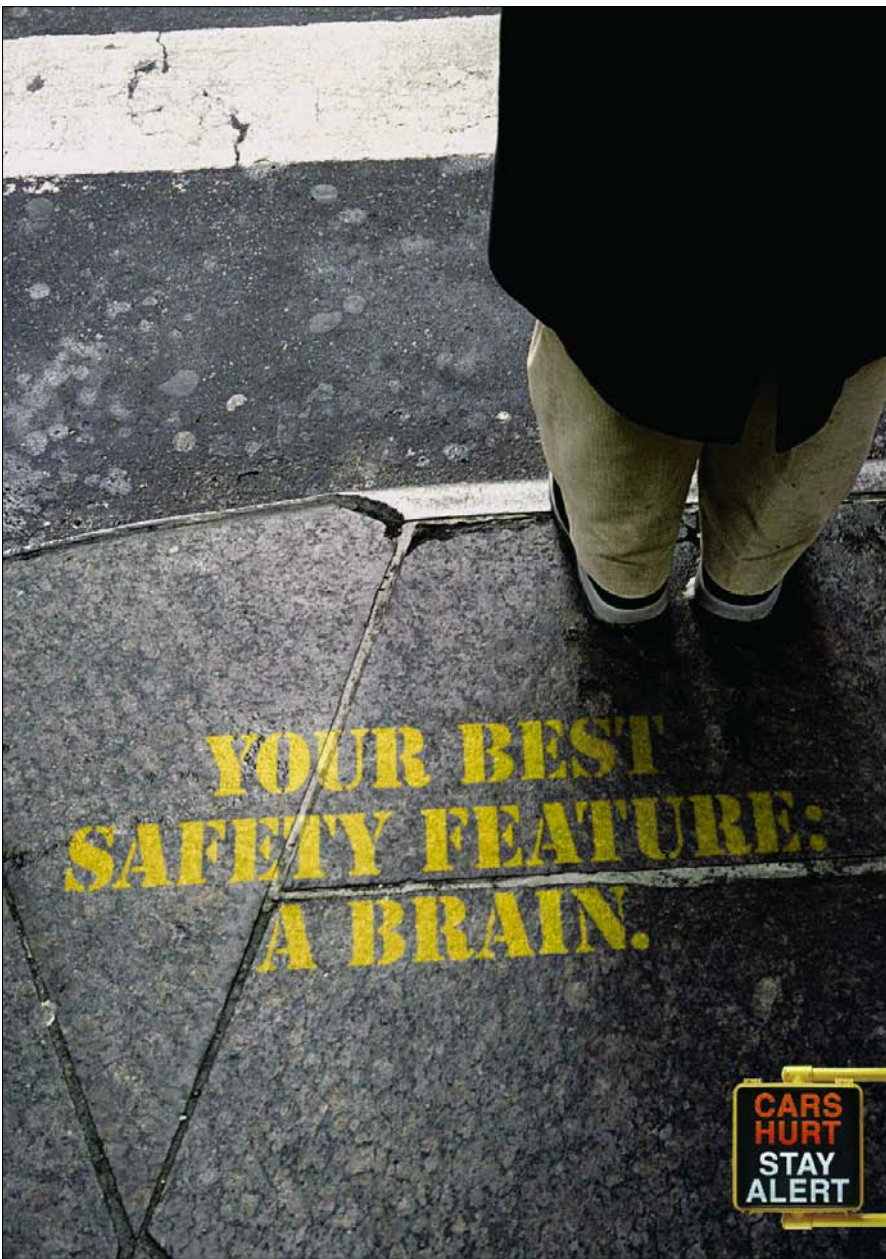
Speed Facts:

- ◆ Speeding causes crashes!
- ◆ Speeding makes it harder for you to steer safely around curves or objects in the road.
- ◆ The faster you are going, the more distance you need to stop.
- ◆ Speeding will give you less time to react to a dangerous situation.
- ◆ Things like safety belts and guard rails don't work as well when combined with high rates of speed.

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA,) National Center for Statistics and Analysis

DRIVER DISTRACTION

Driver distraction is the leading factor in most crashes and close calls. Nearly 80 percent of crashes happen because the driver was distracted just seconds before the event.



- Drivers who are **TIRED OR DROWSY** are four times more likely to be involved in a crash or near-crash.
- The most common distraction for drivers is the **USE OF CELL PHONES**. Dialing, talking and listening are all dangerous if you are behind the wheel.
- Some other dangerous distractions are **REACHING** for something in the car, **LOOKING** at things outside of the car, **READING**, **PUTTING ON MAKEUP**, and **EATING**.
- Looking away from the road, even for a short time, can be dangerous. You can never predict when the situation will change.

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute (VTTI), April 2006

Music...

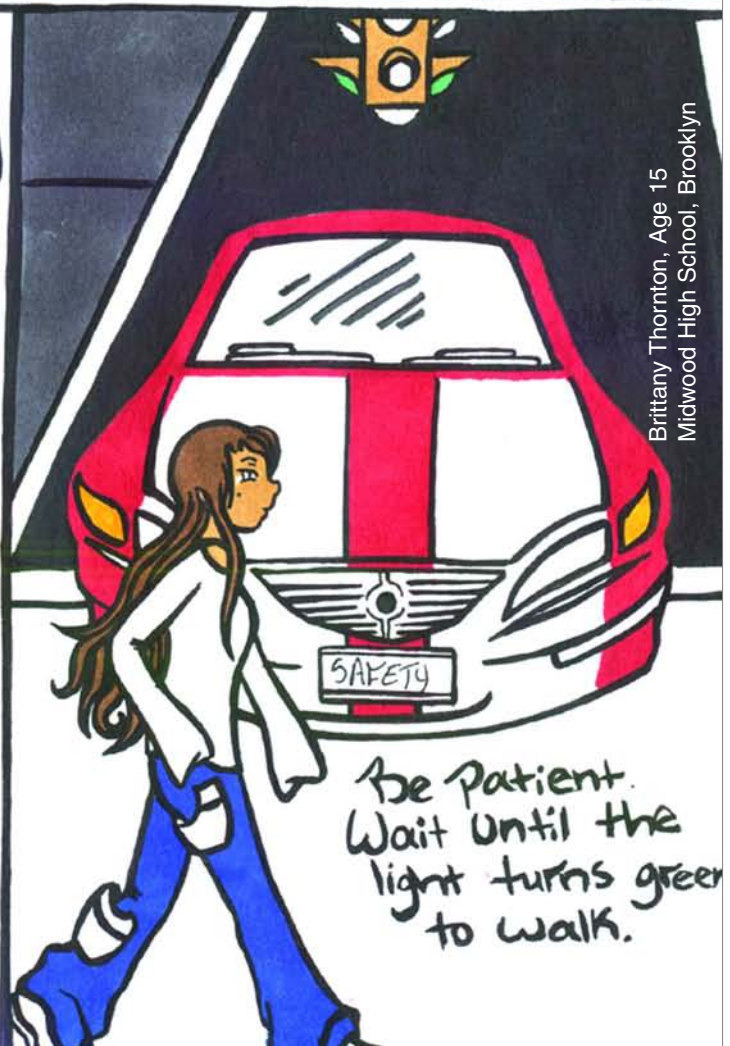
Hearing what's going on around you is just as important as seeing. Portable music devices and headphones, changing CD's or radio stations, and loud music can be dangerous.

Friends in other vehicles...

Fun and games or simply saying "hi" can take your attention away from the road. Passing items from one moving vehicle to another is definitely dangerous!

Showing off..

It may be tempting to go faster, turn sharper, or beat another car through an intersection. Keep focused on staying safe and staying alive.



Brittany Thornton, Age 15
Midwood High School, Brooklyn

family life theatre

A group of amazing actors present real life scenarios with gusto! Their scene will leave you asking “Why did he do that?” and “What is she going to do now?” Let’s see what some NYC students had to say about the decisions the characters made. Did they make good choices? What options did they have? What would I do in the same kind of situation?

student response

pathways college preparatory school, queens



My reaction to the theatre performance was...

“I thought it was amazing.”

“It was funny and smart. I like that there are people other than our parents who care about our safety.”



I was most surprised by...

“The actors... how believable it was.”

“An older brother leaving beer in the car with his little brother.”



What I might tell a friend in a similar situation is...

“I would tell a friend to think about what she/he did and I would make sure that they don’t do it again. They should listen to the advice a friend tells them.”

“Don’t drink and drive because many people get killed from intense car crashes.”

student response

queens college

My overall reaction to the theatre performance was...

"It was very well done. The actors were wonderful and it was very informative."

"I haven't really been in these kinds of situations... I feel I learned a lot about them from this performance. I think I would now be better at handling such a situation now that I know more about it. The actors were awesome."

Something I learned was...

"How relationships sometimes shadow your better judgment."

"If you are really a friend, you won't let your friends do stupid things."

"Do something!! To help protect your friends and family."

I went against my better judgment when I... "Drank and drove." I did it because... "I wanted to just get home." If I could do it differently, I would... "Not have driven. I would've called my mom to pick me up."

I went against my better judgment when I... "Got into a car with someone who was drinking." I did it because... "I needed to get home and I didn't want the person to feel bad if I didn't go with them." If I could do it differently, I would... "Have a neutral party pick me up, or leave my car and take a taxi."

I went against my better judgment when I... "Went home with my parents who were drinking." I did it because... "I had no way else home." If I could do it differently, I would... "Take the train."

student response

staten island technical high school

"They were great performers... They were very easy to identify with and I felt like I was right there with them. They were also very entertaining."

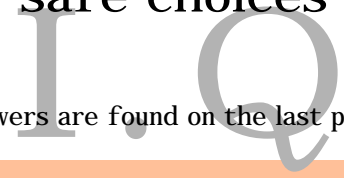
"Something I learned was that everyone who gets into a car with a drunk driver is accountable."

"I learned how I should handle a situation if someone I care about is impaired and trying to drive... I would tell my friends to never do anything that could potentially endanger yourself and try to stay out of situations where you might feel pressured to act in a way you normally wouldn't."

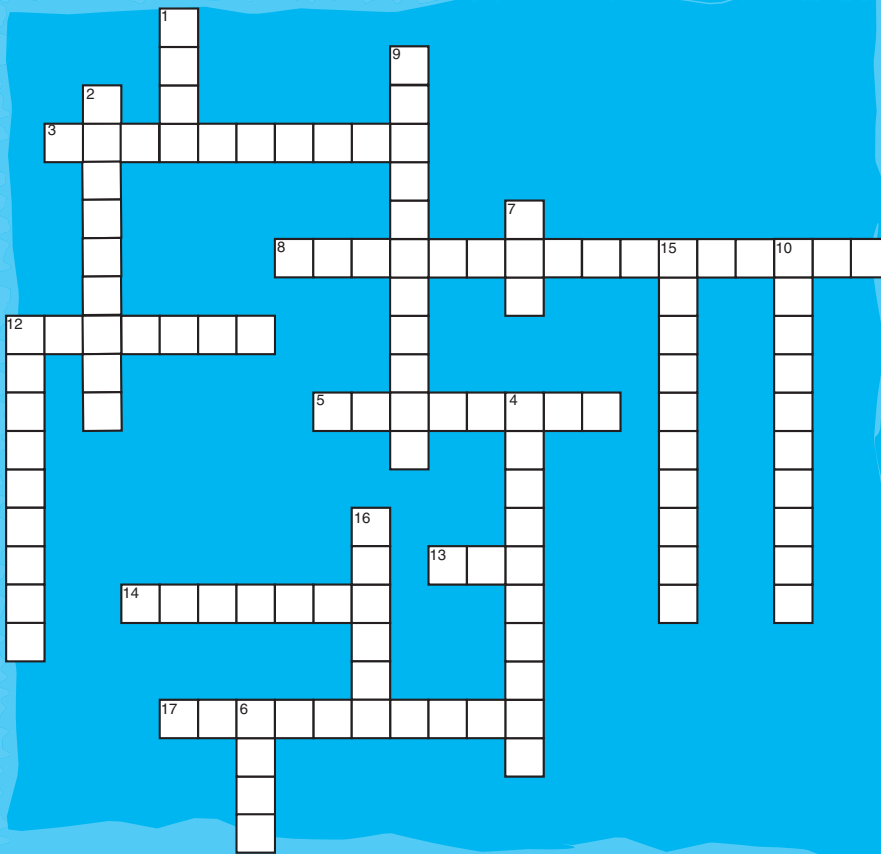
"Think about how you can get home before you go somewhere, so that you are never stuck."

I went against my better judgment when I... "got into the car with an adult who was intoxicated." I did it because... "I was scared of the adult." If I could do it differently, I would... "have called someone else to come pick me up."

test your safe choices



answers are found on the last page.



DOWN

1. the only thing that can make you sober
2. an illegal substance that impairs your ability to drive
4. this begins at any BAC over .00 and affects judgment and ability to react
6. the charge for driving while impaired by drugs or other substances
7. the amount of alcohol present in one's blood
9. another word for under the influence or drunk
10. legislation that made driving while intoxicated a possible felony
12. a type of incident involving cars, bicycles or pedestrians
15. increases a driver's risk of a crash or near-crash by a factor of four
16. wear this to protect your brain

ACROSS

3. always wear this in a vehicle
5. a factor in over 30 percent of fatal crashes
8. this person stays sober in order to safely transport others
12. the leading cause of death for youth ages 16 to 20
13. the charge for driving after consuming alcohol
14. a drug found in certain beverages that can impair your ability to drive a car
17. a person who uses their feet to travel

can you estimate what happened on our country's road in one year?

BY THE NUMBERS...

___ million motor vehicle crashes
___ million injuries

___ % of people killed were
not wearing safety belts

_____ total fatalities
_____ alcohol-related fatalities
___ % of fatal crashes involved alcohol

1 crash every ___ seconds
1 injury every ___ seconds
1 fatality every ___ minutes

true or false?

1. Motor vehicle crashes are the #1 killer of 15-24 year olds across the country.
TRUE OR FALSE

2. Alcohol, food and non-alcoholic beverages are digested in the same way.
TRUE OR FALSE

3. Taking a nap helps sober you up.
TRUE OR FALSE

4. A 12 oz. beer, 5 oz. of wine, or a 1.5 oz. shot of liquor all have the same amount of alcohol.
TRUE OR FALSE

5. A driver under age 21 who is convicted of DWI will have his/her license revoked for one year.
TRUE OR FALSE

6. Devouring a burger after drinking all night will help sober you up.
TRUE OR FALSE

7. Decision-making and driving ability are affected by alcohol or other drugs.
TRUE OR FALSE

8. Driving after using marijuana is safer than driving after drinking alcohol.
TRUE OR FALSE

9. Just a few drinks won't affect your body's organs—you have to get really drunk.
TRUE OR FALSE

10. You can't overdose on alcohol, even though it is a drug.
TRUE OR FALSE

check myself

BEFORE I WRECK MYSELF

By: Fungai Oliver Maboreke

Are you okay sir?" a female voice says. "I'm fine, I'm fine. Can you turn the..." I stop half way through my question as the female police officer turns her flashlight off. "What's the matter? Is there anything wrong?" I inquire as I sit up and pull my seat upright. "Maybe you can tell us," she retorts with authority. I look up and right behind me is an NYPD patrol car with its lights flashing. "Can you please turn your ignition off and step out of the vehicle, sir? KEEP YOUR HANDS WHERE I CAN SEE THEM!" comes another command.

They ask me to produce my driver's license, followed by my vehicle registration card, which I diligently produce. The cop comes close to my face and explains that they received phone calls reporting a man in a red car sleeping, drunk or dead. I assure them that they are mistaken. It's not me. The female officer cuts me short by asking if I had any alcoholic beverages before I got into the car. I am not thinking straight. I say hesitantly, "yeeesss... I did, but that was while I was having dinner." I lied. "And how many hours ago was it, sir?" the female officer comes again. "Oh maybe five, maybe six," I say. "So that was about midnight when you had your dinner?" she asks sarcastically. "Just how many drinks did you have with your dinner?" she asks firmly, looking straight into my eyes. "Uh... mmuh..." I stammer, trying to figure out an appropriate safe lie.

Before I can answer she reads me my rights. She slaps the handcuffs on me and guides me into the cruiser. Reality sets in as we drive away leaving my vehicle abandoned on the street.

At the 88th Precinct in Brooklyn I am booked, finger printed, and asked to take the sobriety tests. I am asked to walk a straight line with one foot in front of the other. They ask me to stand on one leg, with one arm stretched out. Having both my eyes closed, I touch my nose with the pinky of my other hand. I take a breathalyzer test and I cannot believe the results. My BAC comes back at more than twice the legal limit. It has already been three hours since I was arrested, and the process is long. It's six a.m. on Friday, April 23rd. I have a hearing with the judge at Brooklyn courts, but will have to spend time locked up in a cell at the Central Booking Centre.

We are chained together with other offenders, convict style. I am relieved when they release the shackles from my legs.

I want to scream. I want to shout that I am not a criminal. The only reality possible for me is to just cry, or if I have enough faith, pray. My cell is very dingy and stuffy. I cannot breathe. The caked and stained toilet bowl is right in front of me. The place is too crowded to move or sit. I am pacing around, aimlessly. I am angry, but do not know who to direct my anger to. If only I had known better. I could have stayed in for the night. I realize I messed up big time.

I am being treated as a criminal, and locked up with a lot of them. I start to feel like one. I ask an officer passing by for the exact time. He does not stop or even look in my direction as he answers back. The guy next to me repeats that it's almost nine, and we will all start to file in to see the judge. He tells me he has been trying since Wednesday.

Before seeing the judge, I meet the state appointed attorney who goes over my case. He asks me if I understand, to which I respond "yes." I don't. When my name is finally called I go into court and stand before the judge. My lawyer states my case and the prosecutor from the DA's office states what penalties I face. My attorney confirms this and asks the judge for another court appearance. The judge lets me leave under my own recognizance.

As I ride home, I think. My car has been impounded, I have been locked up for twelve or so hours, they have retained my particulars, and I feel dirty and ashamed and bad for having been a criminal in jail for the first time.

Time passes and the case is prolonged and adjourned without an agreement. Eight months go by with at least one court appearance per month. I lose time and wages each time I take off to report to court. I am threatened with imprisonment for failure to appear. During my trial I plead guilty. The judge orders seven days of community service, 16 hours of the Department of Motor Vehicles Drunk Driving Program, a \$575 fine, and a 90 day license suspension.

I have, indeed, been granted another chance. I feel obligated to raise awareness about the dangers of drunk driving. Looking back, I cannot help but feel that this experience has been yet another, silent whisper in my ear to check myself before I wreck myself. I decided to listen this time and follow the voice. The life you save may just be your own.

you drink & drive

What is BAC?

BAC is Blood Alcohol Concentration, or the amount of alcohol present in one's blood system. BAC begins when you consume even a minimal amount of alcohol, and increases exponentially with each drink consumed. BAC does not distinguish between "hard" liquor, wine or beer; any alcohol consumed increases your BAC level.

Source: The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc.

In fact, each of the following drinks contains the same amount of alcohol:



= 12 oz. beer








= 5 oz. glass of wine



= 1.5 oz. 80 proof liquor

effects of alcohol

drinks	B.A.C.	social effects
	.03	Elated pleasant feeling. May affect judgment.
	.06	Inhibitions lessened. Impulsive behavior.
	.09	Exaggerated behaviors. May be very cheerful or very sad.
	.12	Impaired verbal and fine coordination skills.
	.15	Unmistakable intoxication.

Remember... Usually you are no

drive. you lose.

Impaired?

Studies show that impairment begins at any BAC level over .00 and can affect your judgment and ability to react, factors that are critical to safe driving. The only truly safe driving is sober driving.

In New York State, the Zero Tolerance Law makes it illegal for anyone under age 21 to drive after consuming ANY alcohol. The law defines this as having a BAC between .02 and .07. For drivers over age 21, a BAC of .08 will result in charges of driving while intoxicated (DWI).

Designated Drivers

Odds are you have been in a situation in which your friends, family members or even you, have driven while impaired. Over the years, alcohol has become an accepted, even commonplace fixture of holiday celebrations, sporting events and get-togethers. When these situations arise, they can be easily avoided by choosing a designated driver or planning alternative modes of transportation. Unfortunately, too many people continue to drive while impaired, citing inconvenience, pride or embarrassment as excuses for their reckless behavior.

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

alcohol consumption

physical effects

Slight change in feeling and physical coordination.

Simple reaction time slowed.

Slurred speech. Diminished coordination.

Staggering gait, clumsiness.

Abnormal and unresponsive mental and physical functions.

driving effects

Reduced reaction time and lack of attention.

Impaired vision and motor skills.

Less able to process information.

Reduced concentration, attention and perception.

Unable to function behind the wheel.

not even aware of these changes!

Source: The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc.

Flash light shines into my eyes
Been passed out, cold
....drunk
A while ago I said my good nights
Since I bade my good byes
Been to heaven and back
Pranced, danced, tranced
From place to place but hell!
What the heck!
Now I stand face to face with jail
I sway, I rock cradled by reality
Its mother present
After my rebirth
Here and now
On this planet
Called Earth.

When I was knocked off my high horse
Which pulled the chariot of fire
I wildly rode off its course
From the dizzy heights of
The city of bright lights
Where I partook in the baptism
In lethal waters
And inhaled intoxicating fumes
Before I raved up the engines
Of my mortal motors
I said
Been to heaven and back
Pranced and danced and tranced
Within the barrels of hell
Indulged with spirits
Imbibed in liquors
and passed out, cold drunk
Carelessly, motherless,
Reeking of a skunk!

Been there and here
Done this did that
Puffed on the cigar
Wore that hat
But while the boys in blue
Were wide awake
I put my foot down and missed the brake
I straddled the straight white line
And failed
Lifted one leg,
Missed my nose with a pinky
And again failed
But after they breathlyzed me
I was nailed
The BAC, twice the legal limit,
I was pale
I was blue
I was guilty as sin
All I could do was yell
Do not hit the bottle
And then hit the road.

- Fungai Oliver Maboreke

Safety means more than you know,
You have to know where to stop and go.
Left, Right, and Left again,
Be sure to teach this to your friends.
Drive with safety and with care,
Even if you're driving from here to there.
Never drink behind the wheel,
Because if you hit others they may not heal.
If you're not sure to cross, hold a hand,
There's more to safety than you understand.
If you're skating around and having fun,
Make sure you stick with everyone!!!
Stick together when it's dark,
Even if it's just in the park!
Just follow the rules and remember to stay safe,
Because safety counts in everyday life!

-Dana Singh,
St. Benedict Joseph Labre School, Queens

poetry

Wear your safety gear,
That's all I got to say,
When you're riding your bike be careful, okay.
You got cars, trucks,
That drive in the street,
So look both ways before using your feet.
Yellow, green, red,
Colors in a street light,
So look at it and you'll be alright.
Safety Safety, you need it in your life,
So you won't get hurt,
So chill alright.
Safety.

-Charlton Telford
St. Benedict Joseph Labre School, Queens

To my son Jackson,

This is not an easy letter to write, and I don't imagine it will be an easy one to read. I want to convince you about the true danger of drinking and driving.

Your mother and I named you after my best friend, Jack. He and I were roommates at college. I can't describe how much he meant to me. He was happy and outgoing, caring and responsible. He was an experienced driver, a father of three young children, a doctor who saved lives every day, and someone who could definitely handle a few drinks. Or so everyone thought.

Jack died one night while driving home, after a few drinks; along a road he'd driven a hundred times before. He lost control for a split second, slammed into a tree, and died alone. It was that quick. The pain I've felt can't be compared to the pain his parents, his brothers, his wife, and his three children live with every day.

You would think something like that would be enough to teach me to never drink and drive. It didn't. I was recently out drinking. I drank more than I should have and had to get home. I didn't get a taxi or get a friend to drive me home. I could walk and talk fine. I felt fine. I got coffee and a doughnut. I thought, "I'll be okay; I've driven this road a hundred times".

Driving home, I came to a sudden bend in the road at the same time I was passing another car. As we both turned with the road, that car drifted towards me and I swerved to avoid it. Normally I would have been able to handle this maneuver without any problem, but I had been drinking. While I believed I was fine, my reflexes were slower than they normally would have been. Alcohol does that to you—it impairs your reflexes and your judgment.

I lost control for a split-second and crashed at high speed into a cement barricade. I thankfully avoided the other car. Thanks only to my seat belt; I stepped miraculously from the crushed remains of my car.

My thoughts at that moment didn't have a thing to do with myself. My mind was full of the horrible thought of you growing up without a father. Though you were sleeping soundly, miles away, I was ashamed and horrified at what I had almost done to you and your entire life, because I was drinking and driving.

We hear so much in our lives that drinking and driving is dangerous, but it rarely sinks in until it's too late. I promise you I will never do it again. I hope that my mistakes can help you, my friends and others who may read this letter to realize what a true danger drinking and driving is.

Your Loving Dad

DOT has provided workshops for students in New York City middle schools and high schools, demonstrating the physical impairments associated with alcohol. Here's what a few students had to say about "Fatal Vision Goggles" which simulate various levels of intoxication...

SOUND BITES

"I was very dizzy and I felt as if I could fall at any moment. Wearing the goggles while taking the tests made me almost nauseous.

-Victoria
Townsend Harris High School,
Queens

"I was surprised that I couldn't walk the line."

-Justin
MS 27, Brooklyn



"I felt confused, dizzy, tired and sleepy... like I was in a bubble."

-Terell
DeWitt Clinton
High School, Bronx

"The goggles made me feel dizzy and weird... My body and my eyes were a little off and I could not see well. The line was not where I thought it was and my body kept wobbling."

-Jo-Dayne
DeWitt Clinton
High School, Bronx

"The yellow line that we are supposed to walk straight on was going in a different direction when I had the goggles on. When I took them off, I was nowhere near the yellow line."

-Solaire
DeWitt Clinton High School, Bronx

"It looked like there were three lines on the floor. I felt like I was walking on the line, but I wasn't."

-Anastasia
Pathways College Preparatory
School, Queens



"Even the lowest power goggles made me feel confused. I didn't know where I was really stepping."

-Mercy
DeWitt Clinton
High School, Bronx

"I felt completely disoriented. I had no control or balance. I felt like with every step I was going to fall. I couldn't catch or throw at all. I got a headache looking through them."

-Luis
Townsend Harris
High School, Queens

use your brain

FACTS ABOUT BIKE HELMETS

- ◆ Bike helmets are for all bicycle drivers. Nasty crashes can happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere, and at any speed.
- ◆ The brain needs protection. When a person drives a bicycle, the best protection comes from a bike helmet.
- ◆ A bicycle helmet can't keep someone from falling off a bike. It can't keep a car from hitting you. But it can cut the chances of serious brain injury.
- ◆ Because the brain is so important, even mild injuries can cause serious problems. Loss of memory, increased irritability, odd changes in personality, inability to hold a tennis racket... these and many more things can happen to people who hit their heads in a crash.

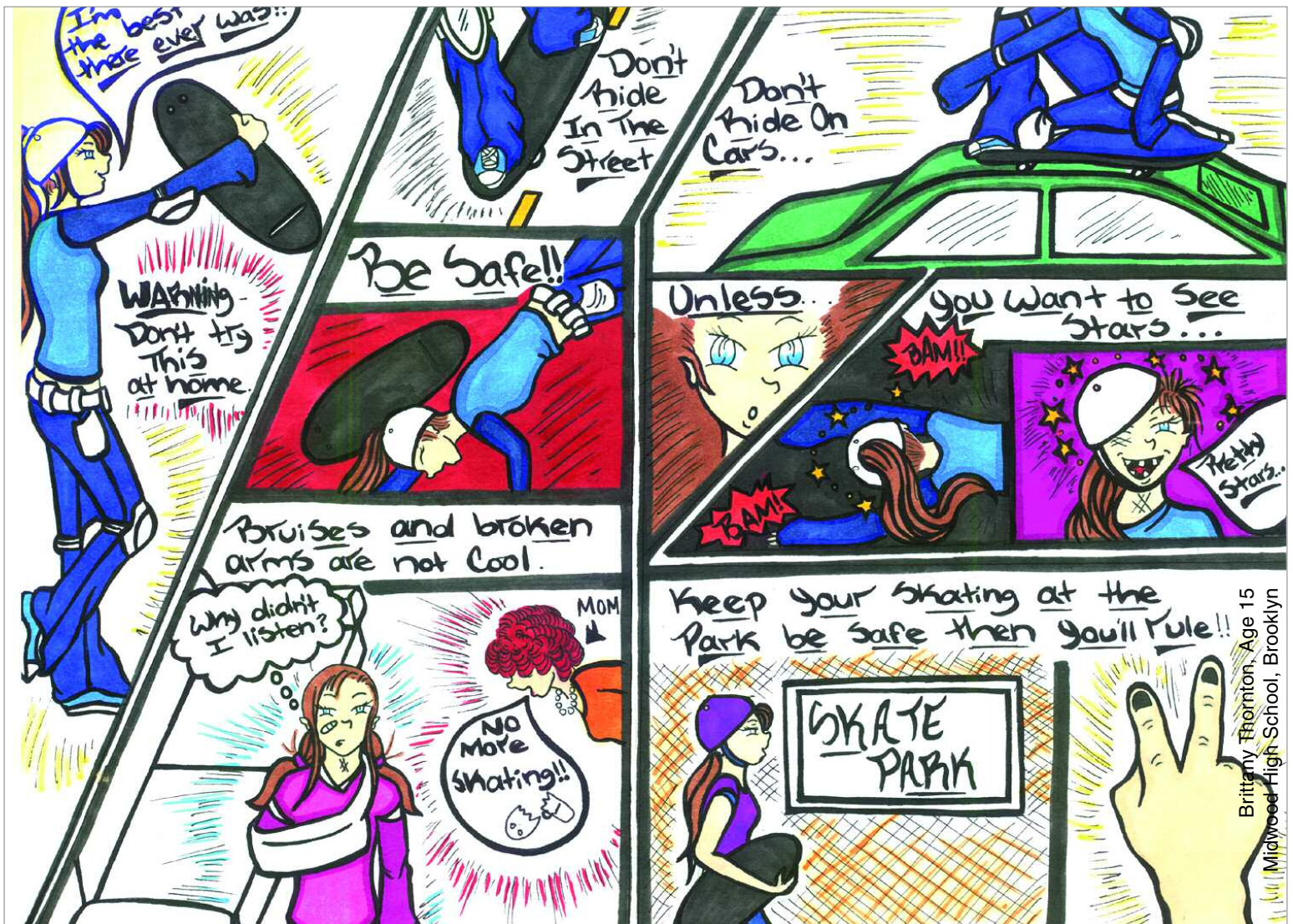
Bicycle riders with helmets had...

- an 85 percent reduction in their risk of head injury
- an 88 percent reduction in their risk of brain injury

Eight Sobering Bicycle Crash Facts

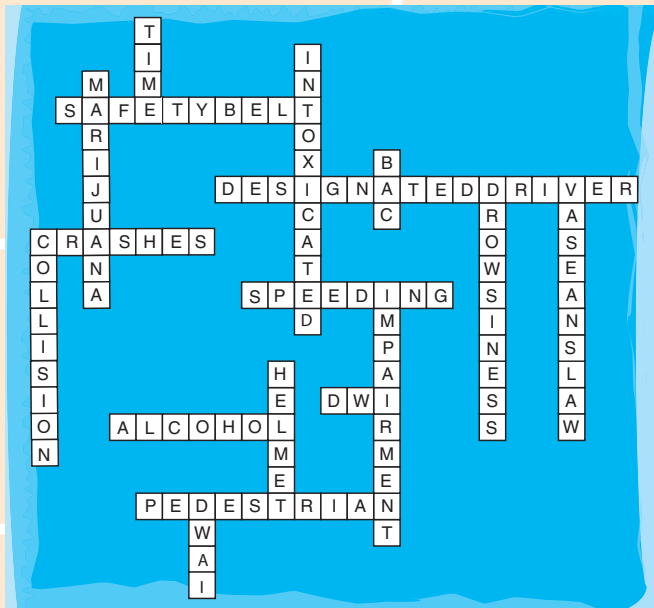
Nationwide:

1. About 800 Americans die each year in bicycle crashes.
2. Using a helmet could save about 680 of them.
3. About 500 are younger than 18.
4. Over 500,000 visit a doctor after a bike crash.
5. Only about 5% of all serious bicycling injuries involve cars.
6. 40,000 injury-producing bike-car collisions are reported.
7. About 40,000 more go unreported.



Brittany Thornton, Age 15
Midwood High School, Brooklyn

answers from page 12



by the numbers

6.2 million motor vehicle crashes

2.8 million injuries

42,636 total fatalities

16,694 alcohol-related fatalities

39 % of fatal crashes involved alcohol

55 % of people killed were not wearing safety belts

1 crash every 5 seconds

1 injury every 11 seconds

1 fatality every 12 minutes

Source: NHTSA
Traffic Safety Facts 2004

true or false?

- TRUE.** There are over 190 million licensed drivers in the U.S. Only 6.6% (12.2 million) of these drivers are between the ages of 15-20, yet 14% of all drivers involved in fatal crashes are in this age group.
- FALSE.** Alcohol is not digested like other foods or drinks. It passes directly into the bloodstream through tissues that line the stomach and small intestine.
- FALSE.** Sleeping does not increase the rate that your body processes alcohol in your system. Awake or asleep, it still metabolizes at 1/2 ounce per hour, about half the amount of alcohol in an average drink. So even after a quick snooze, you may still be drunk.
- TRUE.** Despite the difference in size, all these drinks contain the same amount of alcohol, and pack the same punch.
- TRUE.** The zero tolerance law in New York State makes it illegal for anyone under 21 to have a BAC higher than .02. If you are convicted of DWI and are under 21, you will lose your license for one year for a first offense. For a second DWI offense, your license will be revoked for one year or until 21, whichever is longer.
- FALSE.** Your liver breaks down alcohol at the rate of about .5 ounce per hour. NOTHING can speed up this rate—not caffeine, not food, not water. You might feel full after eating a burger deluxe, but you won't be less drunk.
- TRUE.** Even small amounts of alcohol impair your abilities. Excess alcohol that is not broken down by the liver remains in your blood stream and effects brain functions that are needed to drive safely: judgment, perception, coordination, reaction time and vision. Amphetamines like cocaine and "speed" impair judgment as well.
- FALSE.** Many people believe that driving under the influence of marijuana is safe. But marijuana significantly slows reaction time, decreases your ability to judge speed and distance, and affects your coordination and vision. Effects may last 4 to 10 hours—long after the feeling of being "high" is gone.
- FALSE.** On an empty stomach; alcohol is absorbed into your bloodstream through the small intestine in five minutes. After that, it takes only about 90 seconds to be carried to all your body's organs, including your brain, and affect your whole body.
- FALSE.** Drinking too much is overdosing. Alcohol is actually a depressant that slows your heart and breathing rates and lowers your blood pressure. A very high BAC can cause your heartbeat and breathing to stop altogether. It is possible to die from drinking too much.