

Car accidents are one of the leading deaths in the United States for people aged 1-54. In fact, more than 38,000 people die every year in crashes on U.S. roadways (“Road Safety Facts”). Among these crashes, the causes of them range from driving under the influence to texting while driving. Drunk driving is a pressing issue that can be prevented if one is taught about the consequences. By taking a defensive driving course or learning through advertisements and other campaigns, people will be more inclined to practice safe, sober driving.

Ever since I completed the DARE program in 5th grade, I always knew of the dangers of drunk driving. I carried this knowledge with me throughout middle school and when I got my license in high school, I practiced driving safely. In my sophomore year, three kids from my school had gotten into an accident as they were leaving my school’s sports game. It was just 7pm when they were hit by a drunk driver at high speed. The car was totaled to the point where emergency dispatchers had to remove the top of the car to take them out of the vehicle. One of the passengers in the back ended up with a broken leg. If she had sat in the other back seat, however, she could have lost her life. After hearing of the accident, I was shocked. I never knew anybody who had gotten into an accident caused by drunk driving. Seeing that it was so close to home had me thinking: *What if that was me? What if that were my friends or one of my family members?* I finally understood the harsh reality of drunk driving: it doesn’t matter who or where you are because a life can be taken in seconds. I realized how crucial it is to not only drive safely but to be a defensive driver as well. It’s not yourself you have to look out for on the road, it’s other people.

I made it a priority to understand the consequences of drunk driving while also learning how to become a better driver. I decided to take a defensive driving course to enhance my knowledge on safe driving and expand on it further. In a defensive driving course, you'll learn

about “preventing accidents, avoiding distractions, dealing with reckless drivers, and more” (“Guide to Defensive...”). During my course, I learned the importance of limiting your distractions, such as putting your cell phone on Do Not Disturb so that you have your undivided attention on the road. My course also discussed drunk driving and the consequences of doing so. I believe that taking this course helped enforce the idea to not drive under the influence while also making me a stronger driver overall. In fact, defensive driving courses are a great way to reduce accidents. The skills you learn in defensive driving can “help you stay safer on the road and may make you as much as 90% less likely to die in a motor vehicle accident” (“Guide to Defensive...”). To further combat drunk driving, states should create laws that make it mandatory for people who are getting their license to go through a drunk driving course that’s similar to the defensive driving course. By having a course that goes deeper into the consequences of drunk driving, people will have no excuse for not knowing the dangers of driving under the influence. If you learned about the dangerous, life long effects of smoking, would you still do it? If people are constantly shown the consequences of drunk driving, they will feel more inclined to practice safe, defensive driving. The course should also have an exam to see whether or not the person understood and retained the information. By making this course mandatory, it forces new drivers to remember and understand the consequences of drunk driving and how to prevent it.

Before getting my license, I was enrolled in Driver’s Education where we were given driving lessons and lectures on safe driving. Oftentimes, we were shown videos of car crashes that were caused by drunk driving. In these videos, a majority of the victims were teenagers. I realized that this problem was not only an issue for adults but for people my age as well. The importance of educating teenagers about the dangers of drunk driving is important, but a new

question arises: how do we get the attention of a generation that is constantly distracted by their phones while driving?

It should be noted that teenagers are attached to the world of social media. From the moment they wake up to the minute they go to sleep, their phones are attached to their hand. They aren't captured by catchy news titles in the paper or posters lining the streets-- they're captured by flashy advertisements displayed on their phone. To successfully reach the target audience, there should be blatant advertising that shows the dangers of drunk driving. Creating a digital anti-drunk driving campaign would efficiently persuade the teenage audience to learn and understand the dangers of driving under the influence. By enforcing these advertisements through social media, more teenagers will be forced to witness the issue first-hand and how to prevent it. The advertisements will be informational by pushing teenagers to practice safe, sober driving. The advertisements can list the dangers of drunk driving and even provide alternate modes of transportation that one can use if he or she is under the influence.

The only way to reduce drunk driving is to keep working on gathering the attention of our audience through defensive driving courses, campaigns, app features, and advertisements. By attracting the attention of teenagers and adults alike, they are forced to look at the dangers of drunk driving. With time and perseverance, we can work towards ensuring road safety for all.

## Works Cited

“Guide to Defensive Driving - Defensive Driving Tips to Keep You Safe.”

*DefensiveDriving.org*, 16 Mar. 2021, [www.defensivedriving.org/dmv-handbook/defensive-driving/](http://www.defensivedriving.org/dmv-handbook/defensive-driving/).

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