



March 24, 2009

## Better to spend to treat alcohol abuse than pay price later in pain

Mitch Albom's and Ron Dzwonkowski's Sunday columns should be read together ("Drunken driving has no easy solution" and "The sobering truth on drug courts"). Albom describes clearly the terrible truth that the active alcoholic loses all possibility of even the most obvious, reasonable decision once he or she takes that first drink.

Those of us in recovery know only too well how our active addiction made everything and everyone else secondary to drinking and overcame our ability to recognize risks that are evident to everyone else.

But Dzwonkowski makes equally clear at least part of a solution. Sobriety and drug courts have been proved to interrupt the downward spiral of alcohol or drug dependence and reduce the cost to families and to the taxpayer from untreated addiction.

But this successful effort will fail to achieve its potential if we as a state continue to take funds away from the minuscule general fund dollars supporting treatment. Waiting lists for getting into treatment are becoming routine.

We are more than foolish if we don't put a little money up front into treatment and into the courts to cut down the much higher back-end costs in lives and dollars from unavailable intervention and treatment.

**John Andrews**

*Michigan Association of Substance Abuse*

*Coordinating Agencies, Novi*

## Work together for a solution

Macomb County is ranked third in the state of Michigan for the number of people killed or seriously injured in alcohol-related traffic crashes. In 2005, Macomb County had 945 alcohol-related traffic crashes.

Also, 74% of Macomb County students reported that it is sort of easy or very easy to get alcohol; 42.5% of students reported ever having been drunk; and 27.3% of students reported riding in a car or other vehicle driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol.

We need to work together as a community to address these issues, which is why Project Remedy was recently launched.

Project Remedy is a collaborative effort of area communities mobilizing Macomb County to reduce underage drinking and drinking-and-driving crash fatalities. The goal is to use community coalitions to create environmental change. One of the initial strategies has been to engage law enforcement and the legal community in dialogues focused on these issues.

For more information about your local Community Prevention Coalition and how you can get involved contact Pamela Werling ( [pwerling@careofmacomb.com](mailto:pwerling@careofmacomb.com), or at 586-218-5273, weekdays 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.).

**Pamela Werling**

*Project Remedy Specialist, CARE, Fraser*

## **Alcoholics can help**

There is a solution to drunkenness; it's not an easy solution but it worked for me. It's other alcoholics. Until we as a society recognize alcoholism for what it is, we will continue to be plagued with its consequences. But here is the root of this problem: Nonalcoholics do not understand the disease like alcoholics do, which suggests to me, at least, that alcoholics have the key to solving this problem, and we ought to be aware of this resource for the good of our society. I found it in time, thank God.

**James D. Gohl**

*Dearborn*

## **Get serious**

Drinking is the only real buzz that is legal. No one who drinks is going to sanction any restraints on it. The majority of drinkers drive. And if we wanted to do something about it, we would.

We could make public consumption of alcohol illegal -- no drinking at bars, arenas, beaches, etc. If you want to get drunk, stay home and do it.

Or we could give Breathalyzer tests as people left bars. And please don't scream that it would be an intrusive invasion of privacy. When you leave a bar, it is a public place, and since bars are for drinking, law enforcement would have reasonable suspicion that you had been drinking.

Trust me, we could do something about the thousands of deaths -- the majority of them innocent people -- but we don't want to; just a bunch of whining and wringing of hands.

**Dave Rogers**

*Midland*

## **Take away drunks' air bags**

Last week's tragedy in Roseville, in which four teenagers were killed by a drunken driver, is not the first time we have seen drunken drivers kill people -- sometimes whole families -- while hardly suffering a scratch themselves.

In our quest to make cars safer for drivers and passengers, is there not the possibility that we are enabling drunken drivers by removing what might otherwise be the natural consequences of their behavior?

I believe that anybody convicted more than once of driving under the influence of alcohol should not even be allowed -- let alone required -- to have air bags in their cars. Such people should not even be allowed to have seat belts or energy-absorbing steering columns. Perhaps the possibility that they, not just others, will be killed if they get behind the wheel while drunk will motivate them to change.

**Alex Kovnat**

*West Bloomfield*