

## editor's message



# Think Twice, It's Not All Right

Thirty-odd years ago, I interviewed a very mad young woman.

Her name was Candy Lightner. She was in her mid-30s at the time, a single parent, and less than a year before our meeting, her daughter, Cari, 13, was struck by a car and killed. It was a hit and run, the driver was drunk and a repeat offender. Candy's little girl was struck so forcefully that she was knocked out of her shoes and thrown more than 100 feet.

The name Candy Lightner might not be familiar to you, but the organization she founded, MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving), surely is. Today there are more than 600 chapters of MADD, and, by some estimates, its efforts have saved 300,000 lives. In the five years that Candy ran the organization, from 1980–85, there were 500 new drunk-driving related laws passed in the United States.

I bring this up now because it's holiday time when imbibing increases, because of the proliferation of bars and breweries in town, and as a response to the spate of incidents involving alcohol and Indiana University basketball players.

Two things disturb me about the reactions to those who commit DUI offenses.

The first is when I hear sympathy expressed for drivers with suspended licenses. In Indiana, suspensions can range from 30 days to forever, depending on how many times the wrongdoer has previously been caught driving under the influence and whether they've hit, maimed, or killed someone. Those ex-drivers are going to have to take public transportation or taxis, ride with friends or co-workers, or get one of those slow-moving scooters. In terms of suffering, this is nothing compared to the loss of a loved one.

My second beef: Google "DUI in Indiana" and you might be surprised at what pops up on your computer screen — entry after entry for lawyers specializing in DUI cases. "Beat your Indiana DUI — Learn how to beat your DUI ASAP" is a typical advertisement. Defending those who operate vehicles while intoxicated has apparently become a lucrative legal specialty.

Things are far better today than they used to be in great measure due to the efforts of Candy Lightner and MADD. Greater awareness, stricter laws, tougher penalties, and establishment of 21 as the national drinking age have reduced drunk driving fatalities by 51 percent since 1982. Still, about 10,000 people a year are killed in drunk driving accidents.

How do you get drivers, especially young people and heavy drinkers, to think twice before getting behind the wheel of a vehicle when they're intoxicated? New York City found a way. If you are arrested for a DUI in the Big Apple, the NYPD can take your car away. And they don't give it back.

Perhaps something to consider the next time a drunk driver kills a child.

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