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Pumphrey Law Scholarship Essay

One of my professors at Florida State University ends every class by pleading his students to do just one thing –“Please, do not drink and drive. Be safe.” This professor has taught thousands of students and boasts an impressive and long career. Every time I hear him say these words, I can’t help but imagine the things he must have seen throughout his many years of teaching. Has he had to deal with the loss of students due to drunk driving? Has he had to deal with grieving parents? Has he had to deal with a loss in his own family? I do not know the story behind his plea (or if there is one at all), but I do know his efforts stem from a sincere concern for his students’ safety and wellbeing. As a professor, he desires success for his students above all else. As his students, we have learned how to think critically in the classroom and are well aware of how our academic choices can alter our futures. I imagine this is his small way of encouraging his students to think critically outside of the classroom as well and understand that those choices are just as important. Through his simple words, he challenges his students to be proactive and choose responsibility in order to ensure a life after college.

Choosing to drive while drunk is a selfish act. It is entirely devoid of all responsibility and consideration. Not only does drunk driving endanger oneself, it endangers the lives of so many others including friends, loved ones, and complete

strangers. While the majority of students are well aware of the consequences of drunk driving, many choose to ignore them. Due to the nature of the party scene, especially in college, it is easy for students to be tempted into making bad choices, such as thinking they can drive when they should not. It does not take much convincing by one's friends or even oneself to think, "I'm probably fine" and get behind the wheel after drinking. In those moments, intoxicated and without the familiarity of their own home, many students do not choose responsibility; they choose selfishness. As a young woman living on a college campus, I am very aware of this temptation to act irresponsibly; I see students make the choice to act dangerously all of the time. It is not uncommon to see a drunken student stumbling along the street or getting rowdy at a bar only to then get in their car and swerve out of sight. Because of this, I am always on alert when driving, especially at night. Not only is the life of the drunk driver at risk when on the road, but so is mine and those around me. While I wish all students would act responsibly and understand how truly selfish it is to drive when drunk, I understand that this is not reality. These students who carelessly drink and drive are ignoring the negative impact it has on their lives and on the lives of others. They are ignoring the hard work of their families to provide and secure for them an education. They are ignoring the hopes of other students who are pursuing their futures and academic careers at Florida State. They are even ignoring the sanctity and dignity of their own lives.

Simply put, drunk driving destroys. Aside from destroying lives, it destroys families, friendships, academic careers, and futures. For those who have been impacted by the dangers of drunk driving, they have felt the acute pain of loss and know all too well just how far its sobering effect spreads. As a student who has valued the opportunity

to receive a good education throughout my life and understands what a sacrifice it is financially for my family to send their children off to college to receive higher education, I made a pledge to myself at a young age to never take that for granted. Though I have failed at times, I have always tried to pursue my education with passion and dedication in an effort to respect what a gift it truly is. If I were to choose not to act responsibly when drinking, I would be turning my back on the sacrifices my loved ones have made for me. Unfortunately, I do not have a surefire solution to prevent drunk driving. I cannot control the actions of those around me nor can I make them understand the selfish nature of their choice to drink irresponsibly. However, I can set an example. I do not believe any one person is too insignificant or too powerless to make a difference. The positive, responsible actions and choices of each individual contribute to the wellbeing of their community in ways far greater than they may ever understand. By choosing not to drink and drive, I honor my family, friends, and community who love and value me. By choosing not to drink and drive, I uphold my university and acknowledge what has been given up in order to give me an education. By choosing not to drink and drive, I protect the shared opportunity to learn and work toward achieving academic goals with my peers, signifying that I believe my own selfishness is never enough to threaten or take that opportunity away from anyone.