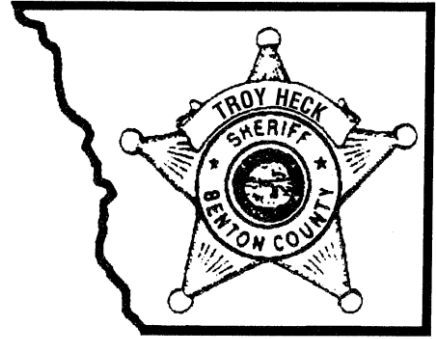


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PRESS RELEASE

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AUTHORITY OF SHERIFF TROY HECK

Extra DWI patrols looking for drivers who take holiday celebrating to dangerous levels
Woman Unites with Driver Who Killed Her Mother to Speak Up for a Sober Ride

Benton County will be joining more than 300 law enforcement agencies who will be working overtime this holiday season, hoping to prevent the type of tragedy that devastated Courtney Pogones and her family when she was 12 years old. Fourteen years later, Pogones and the driver who killed her mother, Craig Barnd, are together today asking Minnesotans to drive sober.

The extra DWI enforcement campaign started November 25 and runs on weekends through January 2, 2016. The statewide enforcement involves police departments, sheriff's offices and the State Patrol. Officers, deputies and troopers work overtime enforcement with funding provided by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety (DPS-OTS) coordinates the Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over enforcement and education effort.

Holiday DWIs by the Numbers

Most people think about a sober ride home when making their New Year's plans, but statistics show motorists need to pay just as much attention to other holiday periods. The percentage of drunk-driving related deaths compared with total traffic fatalities is significantly higher for the Thanksgiving and Christmas holiday periods than other major holidays (2010 – 2014).

- Thanksgiving: 53.8 percent
- Christmas: 46.2 percent
- Fourth of July: 40 percent
- Memorial Day: 27.3 percent
- Labor Day: 16.7 percent
- New Year's Day: 12.5 percent

Tragedy Brings Call-to-Action

Courtney Pogones of Austin, Minn. lost her mom, Nancy Robling, in 2002 when Craig Barnd struck and killed her in a drunk-driving crash near Jordan. Their lives were turned upside down, and together they want Minnesotans to understand that this type of tragedy does not have to happen.

“My life has gone on, but it’s never been the same,” said Pogones. “I don’t want another little girl to go through life without her mom because of one bad decision. That’s why I’m joining Craig today to say ‘enough is enough,’ and to ask Minnesotans to pledge to drive sober, today and every day.”

“I took a life because I chose a drink over a sober ride,” said Barnd. “It’s easy to think ‘I’ve done this before. I’ll be OK.’ That used to be me until my choices caught up with me in the worst way. I want to do what I can to keep others from traveling that same path and living with a lifetime of regret and sadness. Please don’t let this happen to you.”

Drunk Driving by the Numbers

Drunk drivers in the state continue to endanger the people you want to see around the holiday table for years to come — children, parents, grandparents and friends.

- In the last five years (2010 – 2014), there were 479 drunk driving-related traffic deaths in Minnesota, and 88 people were killed in drunk driving-related crashes in 2014 alone.
- Nearly one out of every four deaths on Minnesota roads is drunk driving-related.
- 25,258 motorists were arrested for DWI in 2014 (an average of 70 per day)

“As you plan your holiday celebration, think about the joy you hope to share with family and friends and how so quickly that can disappear because of one bad choice,” said Donna Berger, Office of Traffic Safety director. “If you don’t plan ahead for a sober ride, a poor, in-the-moment decision can tragically change the lives of so many people, and destroy the joy of future holiday celebrations. Join the majority of Minnesotans who know how they or their loved ones are going to safely get home.”

DWI Consequences

- Loss of license for up to a year, thousands of dollars in costs and possible jail time.
- Repeat DWI offenders, as well as first-time offenders arrested at 0.16 and above alcohol-concentration level, must use ignition interlock in order to regain legal driving privileges or face at least one year without a driver’s license.
- Offenders with three or more offenses are required to use interlock for three to six years, or they will never regain driving privileges.

Prevent Drunk Driving

- Plan for a safe ride – designate a sober driver, use a cab/public transportation or stay at the location of the celebration.
- Offer to be a designated driver, or be available to pick up a loved one anytime, anywhere.
- Buckle up – the best defense against a drunk driver.
- Report drunk driving – call 911 when witnessing impaired driving behavior. Be prepared to provide location, license plate number and observed dangerous behavior.



Sheriff Troy Heck