

## **Kyle W. Kiihnl Memorial Scholarship Award Winner**

Alexander Buckley, Houston High School, 2018

*Explain why Maggie's Law is a major step forward in getting us to realize the seriousness of driving sleepy.*

***This country needs a wake-up call!*** Drowsy driving is a major safety issue, and legislation such as Maggie's Law in New Jersey is a major step in the right direction. But, clearly, more work needs to be done. Just this past week, in a story on FoxNews.com, the American Automobile Association (AAA) reported that the percentage of crashes involving drowsiness is nearly eight times higher than government estimates. This negates federal statistics that estimated drowsiness was involved in only 1 to 2 percent of crashes. Instead, AAA, having conducted a study of its own using cameras placed in more than 3,500 cars, found drowsiness to be a factor in about one in every 10 accidents!

When drivers don't get enough sleep, they put everyone on the road at risk. And, according to experts, short-term tactics such as singing, rolling down the window, and drinking caffeinated beverages don't work. While new auto technologies such as forward collision and lane departure warnings and automatic emergency braking may help, ultimately it's going to take a cultural change among American drivers to make a significant difference in preventing drowsy driving crashes.

Despite these staggering statistics, only two states in the U.S. – Arkansas and New Jersey – have any laws against drowsy driving. Other states have had difficulty passing similar legislation, so they have relied on resolutions, highway reminders, and information in driver's education courses and driver's manuals.

Carole McDonnell's daughter, Maggie, was killed in 1997 when a driver who previously had been doing drugs and hadn't slept in 30 hours crashed into her. The driver received only a \$200 fine because at that time it wasn't against the law to drive while fatigued. McDonnell worked with New Jersey state leaders to draft legislation – named Maggie's Law after her daughter – that allows for a prison sentence if a driver, after having not slept for more than 24 consecutive hours, is involved in an accident.

Maggie's Law was enacted in 2003, but is tough to enforce because we currently lack the ability to measure someone's drowsiness in the same way that we can measure their alcohol consumption with a breathalyzer. This makes enforcement and prosecution difficult unless the driver readily admits to being drowsy or sleep deprived.

So, until we have a tool that can actually measure someone's drowsiness, I recommend a comprehensive, social media marketing campaign to help generate public awareness about the dangers of driving drowsy. Similar to past campaigns that were designed to prevent driving under the influence and driving while distracted, getting people to talk and think about the consequences of drowsy driving is a simple and effective way to reduce the number of these accidents. I have drafted some social media graphics below that could be used to promote both the Kyle W. Kiihnl Memorial Foundation and its mission of saving lives by educating drivers on the dangers of driving fatigued.

As I was working on these designs, my father conveyed his own experience with driving drowsy from back when he was in college. While driving home after working an overnight shift, he woke up suddenly on the shoulder of I-240 just feet away from a stalled car! Luckily – for him and those around him – he was able to safely maneuver back onto the interstate, but the potential disastrous outcomes have stuck with him to this day. He says that after having been up all night, he thought he could power through his sleeplessness. It never occurred to him to pull over and take a quick nap, or to ask someone else for a ride. ***This just drives home my point that an effective social media marketing campaign can help create the awareness that just may save a life.***

This type of marketing and design work is exactly what I'd like to do in my career. After I graduate from Houston High School in May, I will major in graphic design with an emphasis in marketing at either Lipscomb University in Nashville or Christian Brothers University in Memphis. This scholarship will go a long way in helping me perfect the design and marketing skills I need to become a successful designer. I appreciate your consideration of my essay.