



A Certain Decision

By Ryan Sheeley

I T'S AMAZING how much you can learn from one person and how a certain decision they made changed their life and the lives of others. Drunk driving took a dear friend of mine and I will never get him back. His decision not only affected his life, but everyone else's who loved him and considered him a friend. This is why people should never take for granted the ones that love them and actually care about them.

About three years ago, during my freshman year in high school, my friends first started experimenting with alcohol, because they were curious about the side effects. I was asked numerous times to join them, but refusing was rather easy because I had been told by my parents numerous times that they would literally kick me out of the house if I was ever caught drinking. I am a paranoid person so even if I did try it, the thought of getting caught was too overwhelming. The drinking thing became a regular activity on the weekend. All of my friends were doing it. One buddy I had in particular, Daniel, was one of my closest friends—and the sad thing was that he was part of it. I had a hard time believing that he would get addicted to alcohol, but when

I started to hang around the old crew again because I had no one else to hang out with, it became evident that maybe he was. The first time I saw him drunk was terrifying. It was like he had no control of himself. It was obvious that he was the most drunk person out of all the guys, which really scared me. I cared a lot about this kid, but the alcohol made him a whole different person.

I was running out of ideas. I could not think of anything that would help him out with his alcohol abuse, but allow us to remain friends. It was hard to believe that I was watching my best friend drink his life away. I thought about talking to the school counselor but that idea came and went, so I decided to ask my parents what they thought. They told me that it was in my best interest to stay away from him until he got his act together. I knew this was the obvious answer any parent would give to their kid, but he was my best friend; I couldn't just avoid him. In school, he was a different person than he was on the weekend. He still talked to me and even tried to persuade me to start drinking with him. I actually did consider it, but then I remembered what he looked like when he got smashed. That just wasn't me.

The fact that Daniel was driving after having numerous drinks at one of his "drinking buddy's" houses had never crossed my mind. At this point I was not concerned about our friendship anymore. I was more concerned about getting him help. Starting to become an alcoholic at such a young age was mind-boggling to me. Daniel had been my best friend at one point, and now I didn't know what to consider him. Of course there were other teenagers who were drinking at such a young age, but I never thought one of them would be my best friend.

I remember that night so clearly. I had been texting Daniel all day to try to get him to hang out with me for the night. The two of us never really hung out together anymore. I had a hard time believing that the alcohol was taking over his life. He ended up going to a party at the local community college, but this was nothing new. I went to bed with a nervous feeling in my stomach.

I got the call the next morning. As I rushed to the hospital, I began thinking to myself that the help I was intending to get for him was too late. Daniel drove home the night of the party, never knowing he would get into a head on collision and never see the light of day again. I will never see my best friend again. For almost a year I blamed myself for not getting him help. It is sickening that his wake-up call had to be fatal.

Daniel's decision to drive that night has taught me so many things. I have vowed to myself never to drink because I never want to make a decision that will affect the people around me so dramatically. Drunk driving is not a matter that should be taken lightly. I lost my best friend that day, and I hope my story can help others from making the same mistake Daniel did. 🙏

ALERT SCHOLARSHIP

Ryan Sheeley is a recent high school graduate from North Dakota. Alert Magazine congratulates him for winning the Alert Scholarship and we encourage him in the pursuit of his academic goals. We would also like to encourage future seniors to participate in our scholarship program.