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O'Neal Law Office

Law and Life Newsletter

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Legal Lead Story--Think: Should I Drink (and Drive)?

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Every year far too many people either die or are seriously injured on our nation's highways due to persons driving while impaired. Even when no death or serious personal injury occurs, the costs of such behavior can be quite high. Alcohol is undoubtedly a fixture at many holiday parties and social events and therefore it is important that you have a plan of action if you decide to indulge.

For those of you who are hosting these holiday festivities, be careful as to who you serve. In North Carolina, there is potential legal liability for a person who knowingly serves someone who appears to be intoxicated. Though there are many facts and factors to be considered before the host will be held legal liable, it is best to use sound judgment in who you serve, what you serve and how much you serve them. A mere "let them get it themselves and I am not responsible" may not be sufficient to save you from legal liability if you are the one who is providing the alcohol.

A person who has been drinking engages in fuzzy math when she tries to calculate the amount of alcohol that renders her over the legal blood alcohol limit in their state. The math gets much clearer in terms of the cost to the individual and society as a

Please see *Legal Lead Story* on page 2

The O'Neal Law Office represents clients statewide. Can the office help you with your legal matter? Call today for a free consultation.

One Year Anniversary---Thank You!

January 2007 will mark the first anniversary of the O'Neal Law Office and I take this opportunity to thank all of you who have supported me with business, referrals, contacts, prayers, guidance and moral support. I take my chosen profession very seriously and strive to provide personal

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Tax Break

North Carolina provides a property tax break for residents who are age 65 or older or totally permanent disabled whose income does not exceed an amount determined by state statute (in 2006 this amount is \$20,500). The exclusion amount is the greater of \$20,000 or 50% of the appraised value of the residence. Applicants for the tax break will need to provide certain income documentation as proof of eligibility. If you know of someone who may qualify for this tax break, contact the tax assessor's office for more details. This can be a big break indeed. -OLO

Legal Lead Story from page 1

result of driving while impaired. Consider these potential costs:

First and foremost, the **risk of injury or loss of human life**. This should be enough for you but, if not, read on.

Huge legal fees. Most North Carolina attorneys charge *at least* \$1,000.00 for DWI representation.

Possible **loss of your driver's license**.

Court-imposed sanctions. You are fair game for many things such as court costs, fines, a court-required alcohol assessment (guess who pays for the assessment?), or mandatory installation of an interlock device on your vehicle. Hey, you could even go to jail!

Sharply **increased automobile insurance** rates. 'Nuff said here.

Job-related consequences. You could lose your job and have difficulty getting another one with a DWI conviction on your criminal record. Persons holding commercial driver's licenses are really in trouble here.

Civil lawsuit and possible judgment. Depending on the injury or damage you cause, you may face a lawsuit that could eventually result in the loss of your home, car or other personal assets.

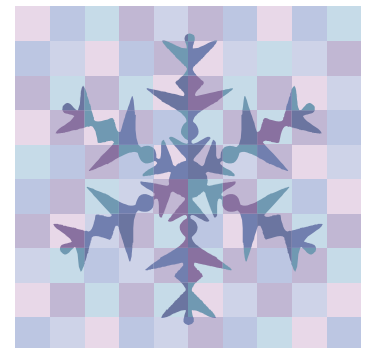
Do yourself a favor this holiday season and in the future: if you have been drinking, do not get behind the wheel. Have someone else drive you home, call a cab or just spend the night. Or just think: do you really need to drink at all? Have a safe and happy holiday season. -OLO

*Words to the Wise:
Take time this holiday season to reflect on your current position in life and spend time with the ones you love. Remember the reason for the season and recharge your battery for a prosperous new year.*

Healthful Hints: Help with Those Holiday Helpings

The holiday season is here and this means the usual bevy of great food and drink. I will be the first to admit that the food is one of my favorite features of the holiday season but that does not have to lead to total hedonism. Here are some hints to ensure that your holiday indulgences do not irreparably affect your level of health and fitness:

- **Water up.** Drink plenty of water throughout the holidays. Try to get at least 64 ounces per day. If you drink three 20-ounce bottles of water instead of that Mountain Dew or that morning coffee, you can meet this goal. Water will help you feel full thereby limiting your food intake. Your body will thank you.
- **Size down.** Try to limit your portions of food and pace your trips to the buffet line. Instead of stuffing yourself on the first trip, fix a modest plate with samples of several foods and reload later. Let your food digest before returning to reload.
- **Get up.** It's okay to cut back on your usual exercise regimen but try to continue at least some level of physical activity. Walking at a brisk pace while shopping, opting for the stairs over the elevator, doing a few ab crunches at home or playing pickup sports with friends or family can help reduce that holiday load.
- **Libation down.** Alcohol tends to loosen our inhibitions in many ways including the amount of food we consume. Moreover, alcohol has many empty calories. Drink in moderation and never drink and drive (see Legal Lead Story on page one).
- **Calm down.** If you go overboard one day, it is not the end of the world. A blown diet was not built in one day. Just chug a little more water the next day and get yourself back on a modest track so you can still enjoy your holiday favorites with no guilt. -OLO

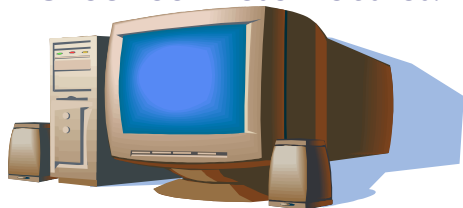


Thank You from page 1

attention and professional results for my clients. I take my responsibilities as an attorney very seriously and I advocate zealously for my clients within the bounds of the law.

I have been practicing law for just over 10 years now and appreciate the opportunity to assist people with their legal matters and questions. I am available to speak to civic groups and organizations and other forums. I enjoy my volunteer work with organizations such as my college alma mater, UNC Greensboro (Go Spartans!), the Women's Resource Center, and the North Carolina Academy of Trial Lawyers. If I can be of service to you, your family or friends, do not hesitate to contact me. I appreciate your confidence in me, I look forward to the chance to serve you in the future, and I wish you a wonderful holiday season and a prosperous New Year! -OLO

Check out these websites:



- www.latimes.com Great basic information on finances and investing.
- www.timeanddate.com Useful calendars and date calculators.
- www.indeed.com Free nationwide job finder. Search by job title, company name or key words.
- www.archive.org/web/web.php Shows archived web pages from 1996 to current. You can see the evolution of some of your favorite website(s).

E-Mail Etiquette

1. DO NOT USE ALL CAPS! It is the equivalent of shouting. Only use all capital letters when it is appropriate.
2. Create a subject line. Nowadays e-mail is overabundant so it is important that you let recipients quickly determine the urgency and subject of your e-mail message. Many people organize, read or delete their incoming e-mail based on the subject line. Not giving a subject line is similar to making a phone call but not leaving a voicemail or message.
3. Change the subject line. After an e-mail has been dished around several times, seeing "Re:Re:Re:Re:" or "Fwd:" really does not help recipients prioritize your message.
4. Use color and font features wisely. Funky colors like fuchsia and neon orange may be a bit much but well-placed blue or red can help emphasize certain points or draw a reader's attention. Bold, underline, bullet points and numbering are handy features especially if your message involves a lot of text.

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Personal Injury • Negligence • Wrongful Death • Insurance Matters • Car Law
Consumer Law • Contract Disputes • Business Litigation • Traffic Tickets

Personal attention, professional results. Who's your lawyer?