



Grenier Law Group PLLC

1400 L Street, NW, Suite 420
Washington, DC 20005-3509

Office: 202.768.9600
Tollfree: 844.210.0333
Fax: 202.768.9604

www.grenierlawgroup.com

Peter C. Grenier

Direct: 202.768.9599

Email: pgrenier@grenierlawgroup.com

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PRESS RELEASE

Statement of David and Pamela Murk In Response To Montgomery County Police Report Regarding June 25, 2015, Death of Alex Murk

September 15 marked our son Alex's 19th birthday. He was not here to celebrate that birthday. Recently, we received a tuition refund check from Penn State University, where Alex was set to start his college career in August. That will never happen.

Alex is not here because on June 25, he was killed while a rear seat passenger in a car being driven by another 18 year old, Sam Ellis. We have just learned that Sam Ellis' blood alcohol level was well above the legal limit. We have just learned that illegal drugs were found in Sam Ellis' blood. We have learned that this was not the first time that Sam Ellis has had a run-in with the law on alcohol-related issues.

We have learned that at the time of the crash, Sam Ellis was driving at least 30 miles per hour over the speed limit, and may have been driving upwards of 65 miles per hour over the speed limit.

Needless to say, this has been a lot – almost too much -- for us to absorb. The details into what happened that night re-opens fresh wounds and our family is absolutely devastated.

We want to thank the numerous members of the Montgomery County Police Department for their thorough investigation of this tragedy and their comprehensive report. It goes without saying, we were extremely disappointed that so many families and friends of Alex and Calvin within our community who had knowledge of what took place that evening, were unwilling to come forward without subpoenas and a Grand Jury proceeding. While the completed investigation and report will never bring back our beloved Alex, it does give us a close-up glimpse into what has become all too common in our society – teenaged drinking and driving. Too many times, we are picking up the morning paper, or turning on the morning news, and seeing yet another alcohol-fueled tragedy involving teens who drink and drive.

Yet we never hear about the details of where this happens, how it happens, or why it happens. We read about it, we shake our heads, and we do nothing about it.

The police report in this case does give us some of those answers – and they are nothing short of appalling. According to the police report, a *parent* – yes, a *parent* – apparently knew about and permitted underage drinking to occur in his very own house under his very own roof.... and made light of it. Kenneth Saltzman was present while his daughter hosted 25-30 of her teenage friends and they consumed alcohol in the home. According to the report, fake i.d.'s were used to purchase quantities of vodka and two 30-packs of beer.

Reportedly, teenager David Yazdani, who brought the two 30-packs of beer he had purchased with a fake Ohio driver's license, met Mr. Saltzman when he arrived, and Mr. Saltzman "joked with Yazdani...when he asked him if one of the 30 packs was for him."

Those facts alone should shock the conscience of any law-abiding concerned parent. But what is even more shocking is the fact that under Maryland law, a first offense for behavior such as Mr. Saltzman's carries no jail time, but merely a maximum fine of \$2500.00. \$2500 for something that results in the death of two young men. And a repeat violation of that statute only increases the fine to \$5000. And not even a chance of jail time.

THAT is the law that needs to change, if we want to have any chance of changing the way our society thinks and acts. Hold the adults responsible.

ALLOW civil suits to be brought against such parents. That is the only way to try to stop these tragedies from continuing to happen.

Another way to stop it is to punish the responsible drivers harshly, yet justly. Slaps on the wrist, or short jail sentences, will NOT deter other teenagers from acting as grossly irresponsibly as Sam Ellis did that night. Of course the wrongdoer will show remorse after he has killed one or two friends. Remorse is after-the-fact. Remorse does not bring back our beloved Alex, or Calvin Li.

We need to take steps to make the other Sam Ellises out there think before they do things like Sam Ellis did that night. The Courts should make an example of Sam Ellis in meting out a sentence that shows other teenagers what will happen if they do the same thing.

We have every faith that Mark Anderson, of the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office, will prosecute Sam Ellis to the fullest extent of the law, and seek to make his case the deterrent to others that is so desperately needed in our community.

We do not want any other parent to ever have to endure what we will endure for the rest of our lives.

Please direct all inquiries to Peter C. Grenier, Esquire, at pgrenier@grenierlawgroup.com or 202-768-9599.