

Drunken Driving Affects Everyone

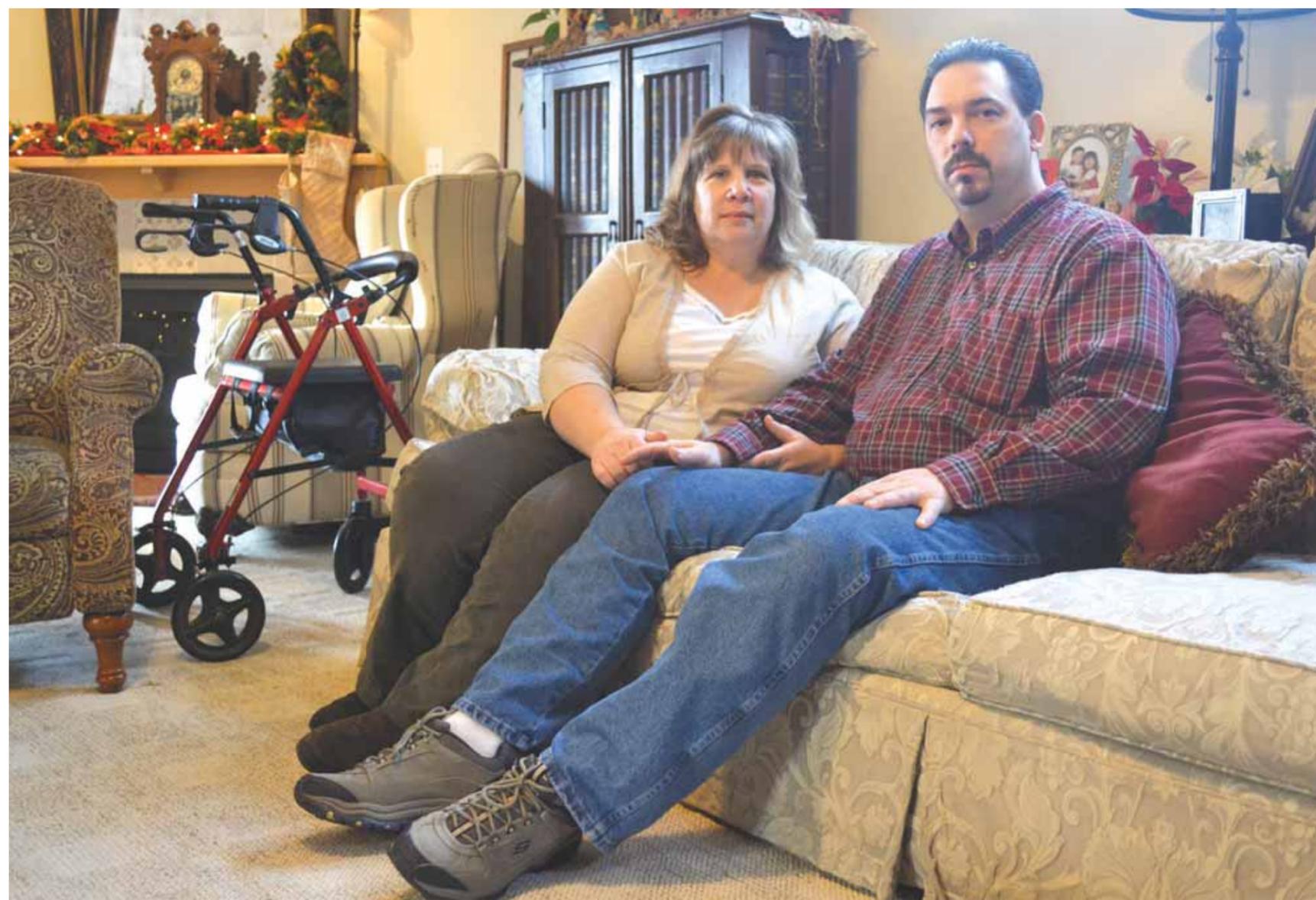


Photo by Steven Wyble

Michelle Kill, left, sits with her husband Andrew Kill, who was injured in May of this year when his car was struck by an allegedly drunken driver in Olympia. Andrew Kill's short-term memory was impacted by brain shearing resulting from the accident.

Life Has Forever Changed for Rainier Man Struck By Car

By **STEVEN WYBLE**
swyble@yelmonline.com

Andrew Kill, 42, of Rainier, was driving home after comforting a grieving family the evening of May 19. Kill was a funeral director and embalmer at Funeral Alternatives of Washington in Lacey. He was beloved by clients for his compassion and care during their times of grief.

As Kill was driving home that May evening, a drunken driver T-boned his car in Olympia. It was time for his wife and two young children to grieve. Kill survived, but his life and the life of his family has not been the same since. He was airlifted to Harborview Medical Center in Seattle for injuries that included bleeding in his brain, a broken sternum, seven broken ribs and two punctured lungs. He was in a coma for four weeks.

"The fact that he is walking and can speak today is nothing short of a miracle," said Michelle Kill, Andrew's wife, as she sat with her husband and his

mother in their Rainier home in December, five months away from the anniversary of the night their lives changed forever.

Although he's up and walking, Andrew's life is different than it was before the accident, Michelle said. So is hers and their children's.

RECOVERY

As a result of the accident, Andrew experienced brain shearing, which disrupts the brain's axons, which allow neurons to communicate with each other. His brain has to find new neural pathways.

His long-term memory is intact, but doctors are concerned about his short-term memory, Michelle said. His higher cognitive functions will likely be permanently affected and his chances of going back to work are small.

"That affected us greatly," she said. "He's got his bachelor's degree in mortuary science. He was a very well-loved part of the community in Lacey and Tumwater and Olympia. ... We had

so many families that he has served send us cards and money and he's still asked about. He still gets phone calls on his own phone wondering if he's back at work so he can work with some people because he has such a compassion to help others in his industry."

Andrew said one of the hardest things for him is that he's had to relearn how to read. He was a voracious reader before the accident, Michelle said.

"He loved reading — quite the history buff," she said. "And now, he can't. He really can't. It's too frustrating. He can't remember, he has to reread it."

"He would read the newspaper, he'd read anything he could get his hands on. It was annoying because he'd read at the table and not talk to me and I used to get mad at him: 'Put that down!' And he'd read to the kids."

Kill's mother, Darlene, sold her home in Ohio and moved into the family's Rainier home to help with her son's recovery and care.

"People always say, 'When

MADD's Tie One On For Safety Red Ribbons are available at locations throughout the community or by contacting MADD at 206-734-3205. For more information and a list of participating organizations, visit <http://redribbons.maddwashington.com/>.

will things get back to normal?" she said. "And what we as a family need to realize and our friends need to realize is that this is normal now. We have to adjust to this way of life — a new normal."

THE ACCIDENT

According to the Washington State Patrol, it was Tyreen M. Wells, then 36, of Lacey, who reportedly struck Kill's vehicle in Lacey at 10:36 p.m. May 19.

Wells was stopped by a Thurston County Sheriff's Department deputy and allegedly fled at a high speed. She reportedly failed to stop at a stop sign before colliding with Kill's vehicle.

Wells was charged with vehicular assault, eluding and driving with a suspended license. She was treated at the scene for injuries and booked into Thurston County Jail.

Anger seems like a natural emotion to feel in the wake of such a life-altering event. But Michelle said the family's faith keeps the anger at bay.

"We don't want to allow the hate to enter our hearts, because it's not beneficial to Andy's recovery and that is the most important thing in our lives right now," she said. "Am I frustrated? Oh, yeah. It's funny, she just represents a group of people to me in a lot of ways. I'm frustrated with the fact that she will only serve three years max. That, to me, for almost taking my husband's life — well, she did take my husband's life, the life he knew."

"I have moments where I have to privately grieve the old Andrew that I married, because that's not the Andrew now. I'm mad that three years is it."

She said she understands the strain the prison system is under, but wonders why there aren't more innovative programs in place to monitor repeat offenders or use new technologies to prevent offenders from getting behind the wheel drunk again.

"There's just big holes in the system that I think wouldn't require much money to fix to help

See **DON'T**, page B5

THIS MESSAGE BROUGHT TO YOU
BY THESE ADVERTISERS AND THE
NISQUALLY VALLEY NEWS ...

Attwood Auto Sales
OVER 40 YEARS
1507 YELM AVE. • YELM • 360-458-4887
www.AttwoodAutoSales.com

ACROSS FROM
YELM CITY PARK
the Barber Shop
Happy New Year!
360-400-5000
303 1st St S. Yelm

BAYDO 35108
92nd Ave. S.
McKenna
Est. 1937
360.400.CHEV
WWW.BAYDO.COM

Have a Safe Holiday Season!
BECK INSURANCE AGENCY
Chris, Bernice, Bronon
715 E. Yelm Ave. Ste 4
Yelm, WA
FARMERS INSURANCE 360-458-4545

Think Before You Drink!
BIG DADDY'S
LOCATED NEXT TO TAHOMA VALLEY GOLF COURSE
360.960.1078
15425 Mosman Ave. SW • Yelm

Easthaven Villa
Assisted Living & Memory Care
360-458-2800
311 Cullens Rd. NW • Yelm, WA

J&I Power Equipment
10615 Bald Hill Rd SE • Yelm, WA
360-400-6000

Jim Bob's CHUCK WAGON Be Sober!
BREAKFAST LUNCH & DINNER
35119 SR 507 • McKenna
360-458-5050

Jason's Greenhouse
OPEN FOR THE SEASON
Feb. 1, 2014!
11337 Bald Hill Rd. SE, Yelm
360-458-2412

Frank's Landing
HAPPY NEW YEAR!
HRS: MON. - SAT. 7AM - 9PM
SUN. 8AM - 8PM
11117 Conine Ave.
360-455-8255

KELLY KAB Need a Ride?
JUST GIVE US CALL!
360-791-1925
YELM • RAINIER • ROY • MCKENNA • CLEARWOOD

LEAVITT ORTHODONTICS
Happy New Year
we make smiles come true
360-458-7333
Yelm • 718 Yelm Ave. W.

Lemuria
303 1st St. S. #2~Yelm
360.458.2699

DR. ERIK M. WELLS
Living Well Chiropractic & Massage
1412 Yelm Ave. E., Suite C101, Yelm
360-458-7533
www.mylivingwellchiropractic.com

We Wish You a Safe and Happy Holiday!
THE CROWE LAW OFFICE, P.S.
DWI & DUI Legal Services Available
715 Yelm Ave. E., Suite 1 • Yelm, WA 98597
(Across from the Shell station in the center of town)
360-960-8366

DON'T:

Continued from page B4

this," she said. "Never mind the prison time, but let's make the fines bigger — that doesn't take much money to change."

THE FAMILY'S PAIN

The chaos stemming from Andrew's injuries has hit his children particularly hard at a tumultuous time in their development, Michelle said.

Her daughter Adrienne, 13, has internalized a lot of her feelings, she said. It took her a month before she broke down and cried. Her son Addison, 11, asked Santa in his wish list to "make his daddy's pain go away," Michelle said with tears in her eyes.

"He even crossed out a toy he had previously listed," she said.

The accident has also instilled an innate fear of death in the 11-year-old, she said.

"He prays every day that dad won't die. ... He's very paranoid that either Andy's going to die or I'll die," she said. "He prays every day. And we comfort him and tell him all the time, 'Dad's good now, dad's not going to die. It's not that serious anymore.' But he still prays not to let his dad die."

Michelle has had health issues from the stress of providing day-to-day care for Andrew, she said.

"I can't lean on my husband in the way that I used to because it will cause him stress," she said. "So I don't have my confidant. Our relationship is completely different on so many levels."

Michelle summed up her thoughts with a message for people who might ever ponder for the slightest instant drinking and driving.

"I would never want to be the person to live the rest of my life knowing I had caused another person pain because I made a decision, purposely, to drink and drive," she said. "To know that I hurt another person and their family and to have to live with that — that is hell in itself and I would not want that for me or anyone I loved to go through that."

DUIs RISING NATIONALLY

A national survey by Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) revealed that 73 percent of adults 21 and older surveyed "have been at an event and seen someone try to drive home after drinking too much."

Drinking and driving tends to increase during the holidays, and MADD in Washington is launching its 27th annual Tie One on For Safety red ribbon campaign. It's the organiza-



Photo by Steven Wyble

Yelm lawyer Daniel Crowe's practice includes defending people accused of driving under the influence. Crowe says DUIs carry the most severe penalties among misdemeanor offenses and could cost between \$10,000 to \$15,000 in penalties and attorney's fees.

tion's signature public awareness program, according to a news release, and encourages drivers across the country to display MADD red ribbons on their vehicles as a reminder to plan ahead and designate a non-drinking driver.

"Tie One On for Safety makes a strong grassroots statement that impaired driving is no longer socially acceptable," said Washington State Patrol Chief John R. Batiste. "Peer pressure can be as effective as enforcement in changing behavior. If someone sees red ribbons on all their friends' cars, maybe they'll make a better decision at the end of the evening."

The average number of traffic fatalities in the state per year from Thanksgiving to New Year's Day is 49, according to Amy Lea Ezzo, program and fund development manager for MADD in Washington. Those figures are taken from 2008-12.

Generally, the majority of traffic fatalities are from impaired driving, she said.

The number of impaired driving fatalities in Washington decreased from 2011-12, she said, a trend that defies the national numbers, which increased.

Between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve in 2012, 1,091 people were killed in drunk

Plan Ahead to Avoid Drunken Driving

One of the main ways people can prevent drunken driving is by planning ahead, said Amy Lea Ezzo, program and fund development manager of Mothers Against Drunk Driving in Washington state.

People are accustomed to making plans on how they're going to celebrate at holiday parties or family get-togethers, she said. But people should be as concerned about figuring out how they're going to get home if they're drinking as how they're going to get there.

Ezzo said party hosts can help make it easier for people to go sober by doing something fun to encourage people to be the designated driver, such as making fun, non-alcoholic drinks.

Companies planning holiday parties can also plan ahead, she said.

"If it's a company party and you know it's going to end at 11 p.m., call a couple cabs at 10:30 and ask them to sit outside."

driving crashes nationwide, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

Ezzo credits the state's Target Zero program with the local decrease.

"We're actually really fortunate in Washington to have a whole traffic safety commission dedicated to making sure our roads are safe as they can be," she said. "A part of the Washington Traffic Safety Commission's work is this program we call Target Zero, which means we're looking for zero traffic fatalities and injuries by 2030."

A large component of the program is creating partnerships in the community to ensure they reach that goal, she said. The traffic safety commission works with MADD, prosecutors, law enforcement and other organizations to find ways

to "slowly but surely reduce the number of fatalities until we get to the target of zero fatalities and serious injuries," she said.

Ezzo said she thinks the public is also becoming more informed about the dangers of drunken driving.

A COSTLY MISTAKE

Yelm lawyer Daniel Crowe said a significant portion of his practice is criminal defense, which includes defending people charged with driving under the influence.

Crowe said by the time someone gets a DUI, it's probably not their first time drinking and driving. If there's a bright side to getting a DUI, it's that the driver can hopefully consider it a wake-up call and get help, he said.

"That's one of the things that I try to do for my clients is just sit them down and say, 'look, this really is a wake-up call and you want this wake-up call,'" Crowe said. "You don't

want the wake-up call where you wake up in jail with a hang-over and somebody's little kid is dead because you ran them over. Be-

cause that's a wake-up call that is going to haunt you the rest of your life. That will destroy your life completely — forever."

DUIs carry perhaps the most severe penalties among misdemeanor offenses, Crowe said. It can be worse than some felonies in terms of lifelong expenses and the effects on people's lives, he said.

Financially, DUI offenders can expect to pay between \$10,000 to \$15,000 in penalties and attorney's fees if private counsel is retained, Crowe said. Expenses for things like alcohol and drug evaluations, high-risk automobile insurance and ignition interlock devices add up.

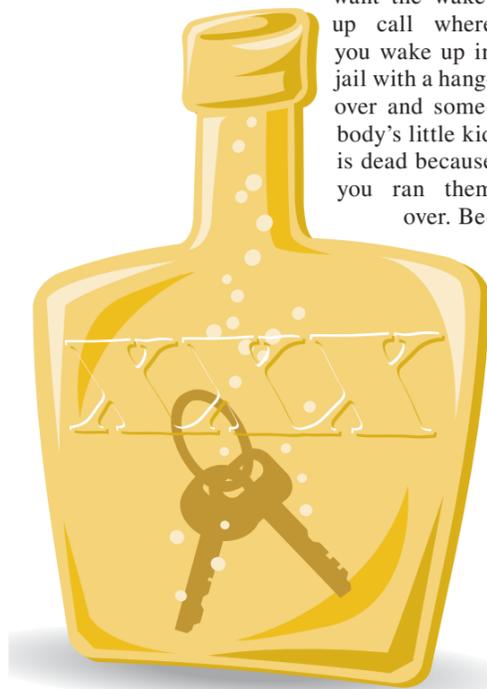
"It can wreck people's lives," he said.

DUIs prevent people from attaining commercial driver's licenses. And the stigma of having a DUI can strain relationships with friends, family and co-workers.

Crowe's in a tricky place, discouraging drunken driving even as defending against it is part of his practice. But he said he's happy to concentrate on other areas of the law if it means potentially saving lives.

"There's plenty of areas of law to practice," he said. "I love doing the criminal defense, I really enjoy doing DUI cases, but I don't know how I can scare people into not drinking and driving more than telling them that you could murder somebody's little kid. What could possibly be worse than that?"

"(When) you've been drinking, that's when people start making bad decisions. ... But that is not the bad decision to make. Make some other bad decision — put a lampshade on your head, run around the front yard naked and get arrested for disorderly conduct or something. At least a disorderly conduct isn't going to kill anyone."



PRAIRIE HOTEL Don't Drink & Drive.
700 Prairie Park Lane | Yelm | 360.458.8300
www.prairiehotel.com

Prairie Lanes
HOURS:
MON. - THURS.
NOON - 10:30PM
FRI. NOON - 1:30AM
SAT. 10AM - 1:30AM
SUN. 10AM - 10:30PM
360-458-BOWL
Taxi always available Sponsored by Kelly Kab

R & M RV From all of us...
Service & Repair, Inc. Have a Happy New Year!
OPEN: Monday - Friday 9 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
16816 Flume Rd. S.E., Yelm • 360-458-7683

TIM'S PHARMACY & GIFT SHOP
106 First Street S. • Yelm
360-458-TIMS(8467)
www.timspharmacy.com

Have a Safe & Happy New Year!
Today's Dental Center
360.458.1976
502 Yelm Ave., W. • Yelm

Wishing you the best this holiday season
TwinStar CREDIT UNION
360.357.9917
www.TwinStarCU.com

TOOLS WEST
360-458-5003
1010 Yelm Ave. E., Yelm, WA
(next to Sunbird)

Wilcox
360-458-7774
40400 Harts Lake Valley Rd., Roy, WA
www.wilcoxfarms.com

YELM Cinemas
Yelm Avenue (HW Y 507) at Prairie Park St. & Clark
360.400.3456
www.yelmcinemas.com

WELM FARM AND POND
DRINK RESPONSIBLY. DON'T DRINK & DRIVE!
OPEN:
M-F 8:30-6:30
Sat. 8:30-5:30
Sun. 9:00-4:00
11242 Bald Hill Rd.
360-400-4141