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Choices: How Alcohol Can Change a Life

As high school students, all of us have been exposed to different forms of distracted driving. Whether it's riding in the car with friends who are texting, or knowing people who have passed away due to driving under the influence, we have all seen it. Many people think to themselves, "It won't happen to me," or "I've only had a couple drinks," but for many this is not the reality. For me, the realization that distracted driving can affect anybody came my freshman year.

It was the weekend after our football teams first win in years. Everyone was ecstatic. We thought that nothing could bring us down. As the weekend went on, I began to hear rumors but I wasn't sure if they were true. Some people were saying that one of our teammates, Branden Denis, was in a car accident and had passed away. At first I thought it was a horrible joke played by some of my friends, but on Monday the rumors became a reality.

Our football team was brought into a meeting room with our group of coaches and our principal. Our coach took the time to talk about what had happened. Many of my teammates were sobbing during the time my coach was talking, but I couldn't. I didn't know what to think or how to deal with the situation. Just three days ago I was giving Branden a hug after our first win, and now he was gone. Our team was taken out of classes for the day and we spent some time together. As the day went on, the reality of the situation began to hit me. I was never going to see Branden again. I was never going to hear his voice, or give him a handshake after practice again. I tried to push through the pain, thinking to myself that better times were ahead, but it was

very difficult. We all went to get lunch together as a team that day before going home to our families.

On Friday, we had a game against Fryeburg Academy. Our coach wasn't sure if we were going to play. As a team we decided that we were going to play the game because we knew that it was what he would have wanted. Before the game, Fryeburg did a ceremony in honor of him. They gave us a moment of silence before we started the game as well. We played that game harder than I've ever seen our team play before. We ended up losing the game 36-20, but we put up a fight against one of the best teams we would play all season. Later that week, I found out that the person driving the car had been intoxicated. At the time, the realization that one terrible decision could end up costing a loved one their life angered me. As time went by, I began to use these events as a learning experience.

As a high school student, many of us are introduced to alcohol. Whether it is at a party or in a controlled environment, it isn't smart. Doing it at a young age leads to making bad decisions that can change your life for the worse. Even if you are of age and decide to drink, the smart move is to give your keys to someone who isn't drinking or even having somebody hide them. Even doing these small steps can save the lives of many, and could have even saved the life of my friend. One bad decision can ruin someone's life. Don't drink and drive.