

## **Statement of Catherine Bath, Program Director, Security On Campus, Inc.**

My son, Raheem, died exactly 4 years ago this month, at Duke University. He died from aspiration pneumonia that was brought on by a night of binge drinking. His death was senseless and unnecessary – a true tragedy.

Since my son's death I have become the Program Director at Security On Campus, Inc., a national nonprofit organization concerned with the safety of college students. Security On Campus, Inc. has been instrumental in the passage of 6 federal laws, among them the Jeanne Clery Act, which requires colleges and universities to report their crime statistics. Until 1990 colleges were not required to report crime to the public – hard to believe, but true. It's just one example of how situations can be changed to serve the greater good of society.

The latest college statistics collected for the Jeanne Clery Act show that liquor law arrests and disciplinary referrals are going up at a brisk pace. For 1999 the combined number of liquor law arrests and referrals was 161,000 and by 2001 it had increased to 192,000. The 2002 statistics for all the schools have just been posted. You can check them out at our website: [www.securityoncampus.org](http://www.securityoncampus.org).

I will not go into detail here, but the list of adverse consequences of alcohol consumption is long and filled with risks that even many adults don't realize. Alcohol kills six times as many people as all other illegal drugs combined. Yet when we see it advertised on TV are we warned of any of the "side effects" of alcohol? NO. Do we get even a hint of the lethal possibilities? NO! Quite the contrary: Alcohol is peddled as more heart-warming than a pile of presents under the Christmas tree, more life-enhancing than a degree from Harvard, more satisfying than a night with the Swedish Bikini Team. It's not hard to get the picture.

Alcohol has been tied to sports for at least a century. This is good for brewer's profits and I am sure they would like this cozy little association to go on forever. Personally I take exception to the glut of beer ads aired during sporting events on TV. Even worse are beer commercials during college basketball final four games. This is college basketball, for God's sake, and 3/4 of the participants are underage! If - as the alcohol industry maintains - their ads are only for brand awareness, then why are they so intent on running them during shows proven to have a massive underage audience? We need to send an unmistakable message to the alcohol industry that we are not for sale – that our children's health and well-being is more important than their profits

The truth is our college students, this country's most precious resource, are getting the message loud and clear: drinking beer is cool, sexy and fun.

Unfortunately, our kids are not just having a beer with their pizza. If that were the case I wouldn't need to be talking to you today. It is not alcohol, but the abuse of alcohol that is the problem. The concern is that our kids are using alcohol as a drug. They are dosing up with four drinks - an already irresponsible amount - before they even leave their dorm rooms for the party! They are using alcohol well above the safe or responsible limit.

It is a great frustration of mine that 100% of the onus for the way our kids are drinking is placed on the backs of parents. The alcohol industry asks parents to "use proven ways in raising our children to avoid alcohol problems". Believe me, if there was a "proven way" available to my husband, and me, we would have used it. It is asking too much of the parents in this country to single-handedly fight the constant barrage of media messages that pollute our children's environment. It's not fair to put the full responsibility for what is happening on parents. Please give us some help!

The dysfunctional marriage of sports and beer needs to end. Colleges need to divorce themselves from alcohol industry sponsorship. It is the right thing to do. Nothing will change until the leaders of our great universities take a firm stand and refuse to send such a blatantly mixed message to their own students. Binge drinking rates averaging 45% at colleges across the country is not acceptable. It needs to change and change starts with the decision to act. Let's change the message that we are sending to our students. Let's show by our actions and commitment that we do not agree that it is OK for alcohol industry to associate so closely with our students - our mostly underage students.

This coming Thanksgiving Day will mark exactly four years since the passing of my only son. Nothing that I do and nothing I say will bring him back to me. There are 12 million college students in this country and each one of them could just as well be the child I lost. For me to see what's happening on our campuses and to know what the consequences could be as intimately as I do - it hurts. I am here today because it is so clear to me what needs to be done. We can't just let things go on getting worse and worse - the price is just too high. We need to take action, massive action -- but at least let's make a start! Let's not just say we don't appreciate the alcohol industry advertising to our underage youth, let's be very clear about it by not accepting their advertising dollars. Let's not let them buy the right to influence our students.