

Publisher  
 Pason Gaddis  
 pgaddis@florida-weekly.com

Executive Editor  
 Jeffrey Cull  
 jcull@florida-weekly.com

Creative Director  
 Jim Dickerson  
 jdickerson@florida-weekly.com

#### Reporters & Columnists

Roger Williams  
 Nancy Stetson  
 Karen Feldman  
 Betsy Clayton  
 Carl-John X. Veraja  
 Michelle Start  
 Evan Williams  
 Bob Jones  
 Pete Skiba  
 Artis Henderson  
 Carol Simontacchi  
 Andy Hall  
 Barbara Boxleitner  
 Jim McCracken

Photographers  
 Amanda Hartman  
 Carol Orr Hartman

Contributing Photographer  
 Jerry Smith

Proofreader  
 Joanne Anderson

Production  
 Alex Perez  
 Amanda Hartman  
 Kim Boone

Circulation Manager  
 Penny Kennedy  
 pkennedy@florida-weekly.com

Circulation  
 David Anderson  
 John Noe  
 Paul Neumann  
 Rod Irvin  
 Francie Moser

Account Executives  
 Shelley Lund  
 slund@florida-weekly.com  
 Lyndsey Walsh  
 lwalsh@florida-weekly.com

Business Office Manager  
 Kelli Carico

Street Address:  
 Florida Weekly  
 4300 Ford Street, Suite 106  
 Fort Myers, Florida 33916  
 Phone 239.333.2135  
 Fax: 239.333.2140



## Subscriptions:

One year mailed subscriptions  
 are available for \$29.95.

Call 239.333.2135  
 or visit us on the web at  
 www.florida-weekly.com  
 and click on subscribe today.

# EDITORIAL

## Avoid the nightmare of a DUI this holiday season

BY DR. STEVEN STYLIANOS

Chief of Pediatric Surgery, Miami  
 Children's Hospital

As a community, we all support law enforcement efforts to protect us from theft, burglary, assault and terrorism. Yet many otherwise law-abiding citizens continue to view impaired driving as merely a harmless traffic offense. Don't be fooled. Impaired driving is one of the most frequently committed crimes, killing someone in the United States every 30 minutes.

Unfortunately, this statistic often spikes during the December holiday season. With commitments to family dinners, company parties and social celebrations, many people drive after drinking alcohol during this season. Alcohol and driving are a deadly combination, especially when the roads are full of distracted drivers rushing to the malls or holiday parties. According to NHTSA, between Thanksgiving and New Year's Day in 2004, 38 percent of all fatal crashes were alcohol-related. Although, staying sober while driving is

always important, the added number of travelers makes impaired driving even more dangerous during the holidays.

If the high risk of death and injury is not enough to prevent people from driving while intoxicated, the actual monetary costs they could incur should convince them. After a DUI conviction, there likely will be little budget left over for holiday gifts. If a person is arrested and charged with driving under the influence, attorney costs can range from \$1,500 in a small town to more than \$25,000 for a high-profile DUI attorney in a large city. On average, someone arrested for DUI can expect to pay between \$5,000 and \$8,000 in attorney fees, excluding trial costs. On top of the attorney's fees, other fees can include increases in insurance premiums, fines, lost time at work, car towing and impound fees, mandatory counseling programs and license reinstatement, which can total more than \$8,000. All in all, a DUI arrest could cost \$13,000 or more. To put the costs in perspective, you could buy more than 6,300 gallons

of gas, a 2007 Ford Ranger pickup truck or pay for 260 \$50 cab rides.

Unfortunately, the state and its taxpayers also have to pay to keep drunk drivers off the streets. Although many believe the majority of the costs for an alcohol-related arrest or vehicle crash are paid by the person who is driving under the influence, it is not always the case. In Florida, alcohol-related crashes cost the public an estimated \$7.8 billion in 2000, according to NHTSA. In addition, the average alcohol-related fatality costs \$3.4 million and each injured survivor costs an average of \$99,000 to Florida taxpayers.

These personal costs and the overall costs to Florida citizens are staggering, especially when you realize how easily the pain, suffering and economic losses could have been prevented. Drunk driving is one of the costliest crimes to Florida and one of the easiest to avoid. This holiday season, avoid driving under the influence. Not only will you save money that could be spent on gifts, you may also save lives. ■

## LETTER to the EDITOR

Editor:

The members of Florida's oldest profession, our legislators and governor, are about to adopt a proposal that conveys \$491 million of our transportation tax dollar to CSX Railroad. Does "Bullet Train" and "High Speed Rail" come to mind? The following information from the Associated Press explains how this has happened.

• Nov. 4, 2004 - Floridians overwhelmingly repealed an amendment they had passed four years ago requiring the state to build a network of fast trains. The measure passed with 4,376,611 votes, or 64 percent. Yet high-speed rail is not dead, say train backers. The only certainty coming from the vote is that the project is no longer mandated by the constitution; if companies or lawmakers want to continue, there's nothing stopping them.

• Nov. 11, 2004 - Bullet train panel forges ahead despite amendment repeal... Authority members said the vote has not killed the project. Instead, they said, the citizens' decision was a cure for freer thinking.

• June 18, 2005 - The board charged with overseeing creation of a Florida high-speed train is still chugging along, more than half a year after voters yanked the bullet train provisions from the state constitution. The removal of the constitutional provision did nothing to abolish the legislatively created authority.

• Nov. 27 - The state will pay CSX Transportation, Inc. nearly half a billion dollars for a commuter rail in central Florida, officials said Thursday. The Deland to Kissimmee route will cost about \$491 million, with an additional \$615 million in state, federal and local

tax money needed for platforms, stations and other structures. The project is still awaiting final approval from the Florida Legislature and Federal Transit Administration.

This makes absolutely no sense and is fiscally irresponsible.

Florida is looking at a \$2.5 billion budget shortfall over the next two years and the governor and legislators are going to hand over \$491 million to CSX. This is corporate welfare at its worse. We are told the state doesn't have the money to complete the interstate road system without tolls yet the governor and legislators are willing to defy the electorate by pursuing the boondoggle.

It's not too late to stop this. Call the governor and legislators. ■

Duane L. Billington  
 Naples

## MOMENTS IN TIME

• On Dec. 20, 1957, rock-and-roll star Elvis Presley receives his draft notice for the U.S. Army. Fans sent tens of thousands of letters asking for him to be spared, but Elvis would have none of it. He was sworn in as an Army private in Memphis, Tenn., on March 24, 1958.

• On Dec. 21, 1975, in Vienna, Austria, Carlos the Jackal leads a raid on a meeting of oil ministers from the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, killing three people and taking 63 people hostage. OPEC did not hold another summit for 25 years.

• On Dec. 22, 1939, two express trains

collide in Magdeburg, Germany, killing 132 people. The accident was probably due to the fact that the country's best rail engineers had all been conscripted into the military.

• On Dec. 23, 1888, Dutch painter Vincent van Gogh, suffering from severe depression, cuts off the lower part of his left ear with a razor while staying in Arles, France. He later documented the event in a painting titled Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear.

• On Dec. 24, 1851, a devastating fire at the Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., destroys about two-thirds of its 55,000 volumes. The first library

catalog, dated April 1802, listed 964 volumes and nine maps.

• On Dec. 25, 1938, producer David O. Selznick asks Vivien Leigh to play Scarlett O'Hara in "Gone With the Wind." Author Margaret Mitchell received an unprecedented \$50,000 for the rights to her novel.

• On Dec. 26, 1974, beloved comedian Jack Benny dies of cancer. Benny was born Benjamin Kubelsky in 1894. Despite the stingy skinflint image he cultivated on the air, Benny was known for his generosity and modesty in real life. ■