

Sheriff Mason...from Page 1A



Jason Henson of Rick's Rental provided a Jim's Smokin' Que luncheon for local law enforcement at the Union County Sheriff's Office on Thursday, June 25. Photo by Shawn Jarrard

the liver, and many factors go into personal levels of alcohol absorption, including body weight, food intake, amount consumed, proof of beverage and more.

Also, distilled liquors have higher alcohol content by volume than beer and wine, so type of alcohol consumed can make a big difference.

"On average, the liver can metabolize about 0.015 grams of alcohol per hour, which is a reduction in blood alcohol content, or BAC, of 0.015 per hour," Mason said. "In addition to the liver processing the alcohol, about 10 percent of alcohol is eliminated through sweat, urine and breath.

"This is how someone stops drinking at, say, 12 midnight; has their BAC peak out at about 1 a.m. at, say, 0.18; then, at 7 a.m. – six hours later – they drive to work, to the gym, etc., and their BAC is still possibly 0.09, which is still over the limit."

As such, there's no hard and fast rule for when it's safe to drive after drinking, so it's important for people to have a backup plan like a designated driver or a place to sleep and spend part of the next day after drinking.

The sheriff's drinking-and-driving message is especially consequential during warm summer months and around holidays, when people

are more likely to party hearty for, say, the Fourth of July and other special occasions.

Of course, the ultimate penalty for drinking and driving is death by motor vehicle accident, which can occur for the person drinking, any passengers in their vehicle, and/or for innocent motorists who happen upon a drunk driver's path.

But the consequences are still very serious even if nobody gets killed or hurt.

"If you're arrested for DUI, you're going to jail and will have to bond out," Mason said. "Then, you'll either plead guilty or you'll have to go to court, and you'll either be found guilty or not guilty.

"And then there's attorney fees, insurance premiums that go up, fines, DUI classes, probation and court costs. In the best-case scenario if one is found guilty or pleads guilty and doesn't have to hire a lawyer, they're looking at about \$3,500 plus the possible suspension of their driver's license."

Added Mason, "We don't get any joy out of arresting people – we like to go out of the way to try to keep people out of trouble, as our main mission is to serve and protect."

Many in the community do seem to get this message, such as Rick's Rental owner Jason Henson and his family,

who provided lunch to local law enforcement at the Sheriff's Office on Thursday, June 25, for which Mason said he was extremely grateful, especially in this chaotic time of national challenges to law enforcement efforts.

Henson said the current negativity surrounding police officers around the country is what inspired him to buy Jim's Smokin' Que and all the fixins – provided by the restaurant at cost – for the Sheriff's Office and Blairsville Police that day.

"I think it's important

for these officers to know how much we appreciate what they're doing to keep us safe here and keeping our great community great," Henson said.

Blairsville Police Chief Michael "Bear" Baxter said others have stepped up in a show of solidarity with local law enforcement, including an individual who donated G&G

Bakery gift cards, as well as the Fellowship of the Hills Church providing LongHorn Steakhouse gift cards.

"Our community is very supportive of law enforcement, and they always have been," Baxter said. "There's not a day goes by when we're working that somebody doesn't come up to tell us how much they appreciate us.

"It's just been unbelievable, from the business sector to the individuals. Individuals just randomly stop you, talk to you, and tell you they appreciate you. With the way the world is right now and the trying times that we're having – they don't realize how much we appreciate them."

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