

Cheektowaga Police made 10% of county's DWI arrests

By **Jim Herr** - April 6, 2018



A Cheektowaga Police speaks to the robbery suspect at a Buffalo Police traffic stop on Broadway near Deshler Street on July 8, 2017. (Jim Herr/Cheektowaga Chronicle)

CHEEKTOWAGA – The Cheektowaga Police Department made ten percent of Erie County's overall DWI arrests during the first quarter of 2018 according to data shared by the county and the department.

Erie County's STOP-DWI Office says police agencies countywide made 666 DWI arrests between January 1, 2018, and March 31, 2018. This is a two percent increase over the 652 DWI arrests made during the same period last year.

"An increase of 2% in DWI arrests is statistically small but serves as a reminder that we always need to reinforce the anti-DWI message as much as possible. Lives are still being negatively impacted, and futures irrevocably changed when drunk drivers decide to get behind the wheel rather than take advantage of any one of the many alternative ways to get home after drinking," said STOP-DWI Director John Sullivan.

Cheektowaga Police Lt. Steven Berecz tells Cheektowaga Chronicle that Cheektowaga officers made 66 DWI arrests. This quarterly number is around

par with the department's yearly tabulations. Last year they made a total 245 arrests.

Erie County Executive Mark Poloncarz says the county's STOP-DWI Office works closely with law enforcement to not only keep impaired drivers from getting behind the wheel but also to raise public awareness of the severe consequences for DWI offenses.

"Driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs shatters lives in an instant and brings untold pain to families and loved ones. Bronte Williams' powerful story of loss makes that pain real for all who hear it and reinforces our resolve to combat DWI with all the tools at our disposal," said Mr. Poloncarz.

Bronte Williams of Buffalo lost her 21-year-old son Jireh to a drunk driver on the Kensington Expressway in 2013. She is a member of the Erie County DWI Victim Impact Panel, a group of volunteers who have lost loved ones to drunk drivers and now speak publicly about that experience.

"I participate in the [Victim Impact Panel] program because I want people to know that Jireh has people that love him and miss him every day. My hope is that if just one person, each time I speak, is saved from causing so much pain to families, friends and loved ones of the victims, then I'm helping to save lives. Because the ripple effect of losing a loved one unnecessarily is never-ending," said Ms. Williams.

The STOP-DWI Office, through the Victim Impact Panel, administratively supports victim members and promotes their method of personal communication as a DWI prevention message. Since formally organizing 27 years ago the VIP has delivered over 1,000 presentations to well over 100,000 Erie County residents including high school students, community groups, and individuals convicted of DWI offenses.

For more information on the Erie County STOP-DWI Office and the VIP program, visit <http://www.stopdwi.org/initiatives-Erie>