

Thursday, December 28, 2006 — Time: 6:04:46 PM EST

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## Think before you drink

paul giannamore

If you're thinking of that last little bit of blowing money on Christmas today, here's a thought that may be just the thing to give your loved one before those pesky New Year's drinking games begin.

"Let BACtrack, a small, sleek, sophisticated and highly accurate personal breathalyzer, take the anxiety out of New Year's celebrations," said the press release from KHN Solutions LLC.

What they could say is, "What the heck, Clem? They're gonna drink and drive back home anyway. Why not let's monitor them ta see if they're legally looped?"

Yep. Get bombed and monitor your breath. It's just the solution for the drunks out there who just have to have one more before heading home.

I don't fault the company at all. It's a brilliant idea for what America is nowadays, and the BACtrack will probably sell in the hundreds of thousands or the millions.

Think of it. Parents don't have to worry if Johnny or Suzie are too bombed to drive. Just by them one of these babies before they go to their next little party where their underage friends are being entertained by booze. Make sure they know it's OK to blow into the BACtrack and if they're legally looped, tell them not to drive.

Sure, sure. You're out of town on that business trip and you're feeling a little tipsy? Blow your own breath and see if you ought to head on back to the hotel on foot.

You're a big-time boozier with 16 DUIs on your record and you want to avoid your 17th? You'll soon have so much fun drinking just below the legal limit, monitored with your own personal breath analysis machine.

"With the availability of BACtrack, an element of fun, sophistication and safety can be added to everyone's New Year's parties," said Keith Nothacker, founder and president of KHN Solutions.

He also points out that fines and attorney fees for a DUI can total \$15,000, making a drunken New Year's the most expensive night of one's life.

This device is ripe for the endless world of infomercials.

"Hey, Jim, you're drinking a little much, aren't you," slurs hopelessly perky Janie.

"Naw, Janie," slurs back Jim. "I blew a .05 a half hour ago and I won't drive if we've got anything approaching .08, 'kay?"

"Wow, thanks, BACtrack. Last year, we got cited for DUI after running that school bus full of nuns off the road. We won't be doing that this year, thanks to our own easy-to-use BACtrack," coos the nearly drunken, still perky Janie.

The voice over begins with Ted Baxter: "Feeling unsafe when you get bombed, smashed or just

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a bit tipsy out on the party circuit? Let BACtrack ease your fears. BACtrack lets you drink plenty while you monitor, monitor, monitor your own breath alcohol content. Don't let those pesky troopers bust you this holiday season. Blow your own breath into the machine and know if you're too drunk to legally drive. BACtrack has a range from 0 to 0.40 percent blood-alcohol content. So you'll know if you're stone sober or just plain stoned. And if you're at 0.40, you're A. Dead. B. Blind drunk or C. A candidate for Liver of the Ages for the Guinness Book. Or Guinness Stout. "Brilliant!"

"If you call before midnight tonight, you'll have a choice of the black or silver BACtrack and you'll be able to know within two seconds if you're legally smashed."

Janie, really slurring her speech now, says, "And ittshh fun to figger out if yer legally, heheheheeeeee...."

Jim says, "Yeah. I like to get right up to .07 and see how long I can stay there. Thanks, BACtrack."

Get the picture?

Hey, the machine really is a good idea if it prevents anyone who's too drunk to drive from getting behind the wheel and killing that proverbial busload of nuns.

But there's another solution that exists, one that, unfortunately, doesn't work in the nation where everything is somebody else's fault. It's called personal responsibility, and it begins before you're the proud owner of your own BAC measuring device.

It begins with moderation, with not indulging that need to get smashed to ring in the New Year. Or at least staying home if you're planning on ringing in 2007 by getting falling down drunk. Or maybe it's ringing in the New Year with that ringing in your hung-over ears.

But since most people won't moderate because America is the land where every lush has a right to get smashed so long as they're not smoking in public, go ahead, get blotto. Buy a personal Breathalyzer-type device.

Just don't expect the cops to care that you blew a .07 on your machine. Theirs is the one that counts.

And stay home if you're drinking. It's way cheaper than a machine and much safer, too.

Merry Chrishmaaaaaassshhh.

(Giannamore, a resident of Toronto, is business editor of the Herald-Star.)

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