

## Sensors check alcohol levels



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**INVENTOR TARGETS DRUNK DRIVERS:** Inventor Dennis Bellehumeur, a 56-year-old former Windsor resident, sits at the wheel of his car at his home in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. The vehicle will soon have his patented Transdermal Steering Wheel Alcohol Sensor installed to thwart drunk driving. Skin sensors located on the steering wheel identify intoxicated drivers by the high level of alcohol in their bloodstream. If they don't pass the test, the car doesn't start.

Photograph by : Mitchell Zachs, Associated Press



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**Sonja Puzic, with files from the Canadian Press**

Windsor Star

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A former Windsorite is on the edge of a breakthrough in drunk driving detection technology that could drastically reduce the number of alcohol-related road accidents and deaths in North America.

Inventor Dennis Bellehumeur, who grew up in Windsor and now lives in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., has secured a worldwide patent for a steering wheel imbedded with skin sensors that identify high levels of alcohol in the driver's bloodstream by measuring sweat and temperature. If the driver is legally drunk, the car will not start. The device also detects the presence of marijuana and is currently in the prototype stage of development.



CREDIT: Mitchell Zachs, Associated Press

**INVENTOR TARGETS DRUNK DRIVERS:** Inventor Dennis Bellehumeur, a 56-year-old former Windsor resident, sits at the

Bellehumeur, a 56-year-old former Michigan neuropsychologist and past president of Windsor and Essex County's Brain Injury Association, spent 12 years creating the device.

He said his company, Arrive Alive Technologies, has generated so much buzz he receives up to 1,000 e-mails about the invention every day.

wheel of his car at his home in Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. The vehicle will soon have his patented Transdermal Steering Wheel Alcohol Sensor installed to thwart drunk driving. Skin sensors located on the steering wheel identify intoxicated drivers by the high level of alcohol in their bloodstream. If they don't pass the test, the car doesn't start.

"I get calls and e-mails from people all around the world," he said in a phone interview Sunday. "It's been tremendous. This was something I really needed to do."

Bellehumeur said the inconspicuousness of the steering wheel alcohol detector is key because Breathalyser systems stigmatize the driver and "everyone else in the car."

"There is only an 11 per cent compliance (using the breathalyser) because it's right out in the open, so if I'm driving my son and his friend, he'll say 'Your Daddy is a drunk,' he said. "With the steering wheel sensors, it's more discreet."

In 1989, Bellehumeur's son David, then 16, crashed his car while driving drunk and suffered a minor brain injury.

The incident inspired the invention, which has now caught the attention of U.S. politicians and lawmakers.

Bellehumeur said he will meet with members of the U.S. Congress this week and has been approached by members of the U.S. Senate. He said a number of fleet car companies have already signed contracts to install his steering wheel and insurance agents have been bombarding him with inquiries.

"My utopian goal is to be able to resolve this brain injury issue and this murderous issue on the roads ... that every car and every vehicle has it so that we no longer have drinking and driving," he said.

Bellehumeur said mainstream use of his invention would save the Canadian health-care system "millions of dollars," by reducing injuries and the need for long-term physical therapy. He said Toyota Motor Corp. will begin installing the steering wheel in its 2009 models, but the company has refused to confirm that.

Last Monday, Toronto-based Alcohol Countermeasure Systems Corp. announced that it has signed a deal with Volvo allowing its Alcolock breathalyser system to be installed into the company's trucks.

Anyone convicted of drinking and driving in Ontario has to install a breathalyser in their car and foot the bill of about \$1,500 to have the device installed and operated for a year.

Bellehumeur said he will be making the rounds in Canada, meeting with various officials and lobbying for mandated use of his steering wheel, once the patent takes off.

"I'm going to take this all the way."

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## DEATH TOLL

According to MADD, 3,013 people were killed in motor vehicle accidents in 2004, with at least 1,157 related to impaired driving.

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