

# POTTSTOWN CITIZENS FOR Enlightened LEADERSHIP

## Speeding cars still more dangerous than crime

Last week's nighttime stabbing murder on the 300 block of High Street reinforces people's perception of Pottstown as a dangerous place — especially since the alleged killer is a homeless man.



Commentary by  
Tom Hylton

But the facts don't merit that conclusion. The 35-year-old victim was not killed by a stranger, but by someone he knew. According to published reports, the two men were fighting over \$20. One man punched the other man, who retaliated by fatally stabbing his adversary in the chest.

This fits the pattern of most assaults and murders, which are committed by relatives, acquaintances, and co-workers of the victim. Another major category of assaults and murders involves people who live dangerous lifestyles: They deal drugs or frequent bars where fighting is common.

### Stranger danger exaggerated

The innocent bystander who is murdered by a stranger is quite rare — far less common, for example, than the innocent pedestrian or motorist who is killed or maimed by a total stranger driving a car.

In March, 24-year-old Donald Purnell, a 2012 graduate of Pottstown High School, was killed by a hit and run driver while trying to walk across Route 100 on his way to work at Wendy's Restaurant.

Fatalities involving cars and trucks are more than twice as common in Montgomery County than those from crime, and they almost always involve strangers.

Purnell certainly didn't know

the driver who killed him driving a pickup truck on Route 100.

In nearly 45 years in Pottstown, I've never known anyone who's been a victim of violent crime. But I know a depressing number of people who've been killed or lost loved ones to car accidents.

### Colleagues lost to car accidents

In the years I worked at The Mercury, two of my newsroom colleagues were killed in car accidents. One apparently fell asleep at the wheel and ran into a utility pole; the other was killed by a drunken driver.

One of my wife's fellow teachers lost her husband, an art teacher at Owen J. Roberts High School, who was killed driving to work. A distracted motorist crossed the median on Route 100 and ran into his car.

Three former members of Pottstown Council have lost loved ones to car crashes: One lost a son, another lost her father, a third lost his wife — all in accidents outside Pottstown.

The list goes on.

I'm not suggesting anyone should take the recent murder lightly. Every effort should be made to safeguard our community.

But many people think Pottstown is more dangerous than the suburbs and surrounding rural areas. It's not.



**ERRANT MOTORISTS kill and injure far more people than criminals, yet crime is perceived as a much greater threat to personal safety.**

	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010	2009
Murder/Manslaughter	0	1	2	2	1	0	0	0
	2008	2007	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002	2001
Murder/Manslaughter	2	3	2	2	1	1	1	2
	2000	1999	1998	1997	1996	1995	1994	1993
Murder/Manslaughter	1	1	0	3	0	1	1	0

**As the chart shows, Pottstown experiences very few murders.**