

Turning a Blind Eye to Drunk Driving **September 29th, 2021 - Meara Kelleher**

LUBBOCK, Texas - College students are finally back on their campuses after they've been gone for over a year due to the pandemic; lots are eager to make up for their lost time and turn to excessive amounts of partying and drinking. Students in these college towns are witnessing their friends drinking and driving and don't know where to start in order to stop the issue.

“When I say something to my friends about why they shouldn't drink and drive, most of them have the mindset that it doesn't matter because they can't get caught doing it,” says current Texas Tech University student Carsyn Kallman.

According to the American Addiction Centers, a drunk driver will have driven intoxicated an average of 80 times before their first arrest. They also reported that 32 percent of their survey respondents aged 18 to 34 said they believe there are people who are good at drunk driving.

Drunk driving is not only a fear for students at Texas Tech University but across the state of Texas at other universities as well.

“Most college kids I know have either drank and drove or been in a car with someone who has ” says current Texas A&M University student Mason Weaver.

With alcohol related car crashes being up nine percent in the year 2020 as reported by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, college students continue to drink and get behind the wheel at alarming rates.

“I've experienced the tragic effects of drunk driving and I would never wish that experience upon anyone else,” said the mother of a current Texas Tech University student, Leslie Sakalas.

“I know multiple people who drink and drive but don't know a single person who has been caught doing it,” said Kallman.

The effects of drunk driving not only scares some college students, but their families fear for their safety while away at school as well.

“I've taught my daughter to never get behind the wheel after any sort of drinking, but I worry that other parents haven't been so diligent about teaching the same things to their children,” said Sakalas.

The safer alternative to drinking and driving is using ridesharing services like Uber or Lyft, but those come at a cost. According to an analysis over Uber and Lyft costs in the year 2019 both had about a \$25 average ride cost.

“I told my daughter I will pay her back whatever the cost of an Uber is if it means she gets home safely after a night out” said Sakalas when asked what she tells her daughter to do in order to prevent drunk driving.

Although rideshare services aren't a viable option for some students on a tight budget there are other ways to acquire a safe ride home that doesn't involve getting behind a wheel intoxicated.

For anyone who witnesses a person drunk driving the first place you can call to report them is 911 and if possible provide emergency services with their name and license plate number in order to prevent them from driving 79 times before getting caught.

Source Page

Carsyn Kallman

512-708-0670

Carsynah3@gmail.com

Leslie Sakalas

214-796-5572

les.sakalas@gmail.com

Mason Weaver

512-966-6781

Weaverm@tamu.edu

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