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PINELLAS COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Friday, December 02, 2005

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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December is National Drunk & Drugged Driving Prevention Month

Give the "Gift of a Lift" This Holiday Season

The holiday season – between Thanksgiving and New Year's – is one of the deadliest and most dangerous times of the year due to an increase in impaired driving.

In fact, according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), just during the month of December last year (2004), 1,210 individuals were killed in the U.S. in highway crashes involving a driver or a motorcycle operator with a blood alcohol level of .01 or higher. Of those, 1,054 had a blood alcohol level of .08 or above.

That's why the Pinellas County Health Department (PCHD) is joining with other safety organizations to encourage everyone to "**Give the Gift of a Lift**" this holiday season, helping to make sure that no one gets behind the wheel while impaired.

With the holiday and office parties of the season, it is especially important during this time of year to **designate a sober driver before the party begins**. Remember, *friends don't let friends drive drunk*.

Designating a sober driver and not letting friends drive drunk are just two of several simple – but important – steps to help avoid a tragic crash or an arrest for impaired driving. Other steps include:

- If you're impaired, call a taxi, use mass transit, or call a sober friend or family member to get you home safely;
- Report impaired drivers to law enforcement;
- Spend the night where the activity is being held and sleep it off; and
- **Always buckle up** – it's your best defense against an impaired driver.

If you are organizing or hosting an office or holiday party this season and plan on serving alcoholic beverages, remind your guests to designate their sober driver in advance – and then make sure all of your guests leave with a sober driver at the end of the party.

Impaired driving is no accident – nor is it a victimless crime. In fact, it is one of America's deadliest problems. Last year, more than 15,000 people died in alcohol-related crashes. Driving impaired or riding with someone who is impaired is not worth the risk. The consequences can be deadly. So please remember to "Give the Gift of a Lift" this holiday season because "Friends Don't Let Friends Drive Drunk."

For more information, please visit www.StopImpairedDriving.org.

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The mission of the Pinellas County Health Department is to promote, protect and improve the health and safety of residents and visitors through public and private community efforts.
www.PinellasHealth.com