Press Release

Greene County Combined Health District
A Safe Communities Grantee of Ohio Department of Public Safety
Ohio State Highway Patrol-Traffic Safety Division
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Celebrate ‘Independence’ from Drunk Driving This July 4th
Remember: Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving

[XENIA, OH] -- The Fourth of July is a favorite American holiday filled with fun, food, fireworks, friends and family. But celebrating can quickly turn to tragedy when people choose to drive after drinking. The Greene County Safe Communities Coalition is urging everyone to plan ahead this Independence Day. Designate a sober driver ahead of time.

“The Fourth of July festivities can be so much fun,” said Laurie Fox, Safe Communities Coordinator. “People make plans for the partying, but too many drivers don’t plan ahead to get home safely.” In all 50 States and the District of Columbia, it is illegal to drive with a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) of .08 grams per deciliter (g/dL) or higher. Even if you’ve had a couple of drinks, you shouldn’t drive.

“We’ve seen that too many drivers around Greene County think that it’s OK to drive ‘buzzed.’ The truth is you don’t have to be completely wasted to get arrested for drunk driving. Remember: Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving.”

Statistics from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) paint a grim picture of the effect drunk driving has on America. NHTSA reports that there were 10,322 fatalities involving drunk driving in 2012, accounting for 31 percent of the total motor vehicle traffic deaths for that year. That equals about one alcohol-impaired-driving death every 51 minutes.

Drunk driving fatalities are high year-round, but they typically spike during holidays like the Fourth of July. During the Independence Day holiday in 2012 (which ran from 6 p.m. July 3 to 5:59 p.m. July 5), 179 people were killed in motor vehicle crashes, and of these, 78 (44%) died in crashes involving at least one driver or motorcycle operator with a BAC of .08 or higher. Unfortunately 2012 wasn’t a fluke; from 2008-2012, among all crash fatalities around the Fourth of July, 40 percent—on average—involved drunk drivers.
Certain drivers are more likely than others to drive drunk. Younger drivers (ages 18 to 34) are consistently overrepresented in fatal alcohol-impaired-driving crashes. In 2012, almost half (46%) of the young drivers killed in crashes had a BAC of .08 or higher.

Compared to car and truck drivers, motorcycle operators are also overrepresented in the disturbing statistics from NHTSA: in 2012 fatal crashes, 27 percent of motorcycle operators were impaired.

Nighttime (6pm to 5:59am) driving is particularly dangerous because of drunk drivers—and the July 4th holiday is no exception. During the July 4th holiday period in 2012, the rate of alcohol impairment among drivers involved in fatal crashes was almost 2.5 times higher at night than during the day.

“He’s what we want people to understand,” said Fox. “Alcohol not only impairs your ability to drive, it impairs your judgment about whether you can or should drive. Sure, you may think you’re ‘fine’, but you’re not. The best thing to keep in mind is simply: Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving.” Prevent drunk driving by only driving completely sober.

Follow these simple tips for a safe Fourth of July:

- Plan a safe way home before the fun begins;
- Before drinking, designate a sober driver;
- If you’re impaired, use a taxi, call a sober friend or family member, or use public transportation so you are sure to get home safely;
- If you see a drunk driver on the road, don’t hesitate to contact local law enforcement; and
- Remember, Buzzed Driving is Drunk Driving. If you know people who are about to drive or ride while impaired, take their keys and help them make other arrangements to get to where they are going safely.

The Greene County Combined Health District is a Safe Communities grantee of the Ohio Department of Public Safety Ohio State Highway Patrol-Traffic Safety Division. To contact Greene County Safe Communities, please call 937-374-5669 or email lfox@gcchd.org. More information on avoiding impaired driving can be found at www.trafficsafetymarketing.gov.

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