

Grant funds Drive Sober crackdown

Heights PD issues holiday warning on impaired driving

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SPRING LAKE HEIGHTS — The Spring Lake Heights Police Department [SLHPD] is one of five Monmouth County police departments to receive a \$5,500 'Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over' grant from the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety for the 2019 holiday season. Other Monmouth County police departments include Holmdel, Howell, Manalapan and Middletown.

The overtime reimbursement grant will supplement "regular patrols with additional officers whose primary focus is to target drivers under the influence of alcohol and/or drugs," according to a Spring Lake Heights Police Department press release.

When awarding the grants, Highway Traffic Safety looks at a police department's past performance, and not its size, SLHPD Capt. Bob Shafer said. Spring Lake Heights is the smallest police department in Monmouth County to receive the December grant this year.

"They reward towns that are aggressive in putting up numbers ... that are out there working, and not just collecting money and not doing anything," Capt. Shafer said.

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Heights police plan holiday Drive Sober campaign

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Heights officers will log relevant activity — including number of motor vehicle stops and arrests [if any] per shift — during the "Drive Sober" grant period, which began Dec. 6 and will conclude on Wednesday, Jan 1, 2020. The logged information will be shared with Highway Traffic Safety at the end of the grant period.

As a grant recipient, the department must adhere to certain performance standards throughout the duration of the Drive Sober campaign.

"The performance standard is two motor vehicle stops per hour," Capt. Shafer said. "You don't have to make two arrests per hour, or even write two tickets per hour."

The goal of 'Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over' is prevention and not arrest, according to the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety website, which states "Drivers must perceive that the risk of being caught is too high before their behavior will change."

The campaign is seen in New Jersey during late summer and the winter holiday season, when intoxicated partygoers and vacationers

may climb into their vehicles after Labor Day barbecues and Christmas dinners.

"During the last five years, New Jersey has experienced nearly 37,000 alcohol-involved crashes resulting in more than 679 fatalities," Capt. Shafer said. "This is a critical law enforcement program that can save lives during a time of the year when social gatherings with alcohol increase the risk of impaired driving."

Last year, 20 percent of all motor vehicle fatalities in New Jersey were alcohol-related, according to the department's press release. "Nationally, 10,511 people died in 2018 in drunk driv-

ing crashes," it reads. "The societal cost associated with these crashes is estimated to be \$44 billion annually."

Law enforcement agencies participating in the Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over 2019 Year End Holiday Crackdown offer the following advice for the holiday season:

- Take mass transit, a taxicab or ask a sober friend to drive you home.
- Spend the night where the activity or party is held.
- If you see an impaired driver on the road, contact law enforcement. Your actions may save someone's life, and inaction could cost a life.

- Always buckle-up, every ride. It's your best defense against an impaired driver.
- If you are intoxicated and traveling on foot, the safest way to get home is to take a cab or have a sober friend or family member drive or escort you to your doorstep.
- Be responsible. If someone you know is drinking, do not let that person get behind the wheel.

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