

# HENDERSON HOME NEWS

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## Getting home during the holidays

### Local groups team up to provide free, safe rides home after partying

By Lisa Siller  
News Staff Writer

Billie Smith has spent a year taking people home.

Last year during the holiday season, he was one of many drivers who helped about 300 people arrive home safely after a night of partying.

"We picked up everything from local media to corporate executives to professionals," Smith said. "We went to a lot of individuals' homes as well as bars and casinos, and even some business parties."

Smith is a driver for Designated Drivers, a non-profit group that provides rides throughout the year to people who have consumed too much alcohol to get behind the wheel safely. This year, for the second time, they will give free rides during the holiday season.

Last Friday, STOP DUI executive director Sandy Heverly announced that the program would begin at noon on Dec 22 and end at noon on Jan. 1.

"There were zero fatalities

last year during the holiday season," said Heverly, until New Year's Day, when there were two DUI-related fatalities. "This year we hope to achieve a DUI and fatality-free holiday season."

STOP DUI, a non-profit organization dedicated to getting drunk drivers off the road and helping victims of accidents caused by drunk driving, is bringing the groups together to offer the free rides.

The program is being funded in large part with a \$5,000 contribution from Crockett and Myers, a Las Vegas law firm. Sierra Answering Service donates time to answering calls from people who have had too much to drink and drive throughout the year.

According to Paul Willson, general manager of Sierra Answering Services, when a call is received, an operator gets the necessary information and verifies that the caller has his car with him and is unable to drive because he has been drinking.

Designated Drivers is then

contacted, and a car with two people is dispatched. One person drives the caller's car, and the other follows. Up to three people can ride with the driver, all of whom are taken to the caller's home.

During the year, there is a \$40 charge for the service. Smith said that throughout the year, about five to 15 people a day are given rides. On regular holidays, such as Memorial Day, July 4 and Halloween, these numbers go up.

The service is available from anywhere in the Las Vegas valley. The response time is usually 30 minutes or less.

"The best kind of action is prevention," attorney Richard Myers said. "We're grateful that our program may indeed save people's lives or prevent someone from being severely injured."

The phone number and information about the program is being distributed to area taverns and casinos and will appear in PSAs throughout the holiday season.

"We're calling on all bars

and taverns to help by taking note of the number, and give us a call when people need rides," said Lance Krig, vice president of Designated Drivers.

"We want to encourage people who have any doubt about their safety on the road to take advantage of the service," attorney Jim Crockett said.

"We're much more convenient than the option the police are offering them," Smith said. The number to call for a ride, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, is 456-STOP(7867).

#### Want to help?

During the holiday season, due to the anticipated large number of calls, Designated Drivers is looking for drivers. Drivers must show proof of insurance and a DMV print-out of their driving record.

Compensation is \$10 per ride. Anyone interested can call Designated Drivers at 531-6959.

STOP DUI would like anyone who wants rides available for people who may need help getting home to call them at 456-STOP.