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Safe Ride Home Returns for New Year's Eve Revelers

Five south suburbs have again joined forces to reduce the number of drunk drivers traveling on New Year's Eve.

The Village of Orland Park has offered the Safe Ride Home Program for 20 years, with Palos Heights, Mokena, Tinley Park and New Lenox all coming on board over the last several years.

"Safe Ride Home is a great example of area municipalities working together to keep the roads safer on New Year's Eve," said Orland Park Mayor Dan McLaughlin. "We're grateful to our neighboring communities for joining us and are especially appreciative to the Michael P. Gordon Memorial Foundation for helping to make this program possible," the mayor added.

The program is funded by each of the participating municipalities and with a grant from the Michael P. Gordon Foundation.

Chicago Police Officer Michael Gordon, age 30, was on patrol on August 8, 2004 when, at 5:45 a.m., at the intersection of Jackson and Sacramento Boulevards in Chicago, his squad car was hit by an intoxicated, unlicensed driver who ran a red light, killing Officer Gordon and seriously injuring his partner.

"The Michael P. Gordon Foundation donates to a number of police causes like Safe Ride Home and Paddy Wagons," said Officer Gordon's brother, John Gordon, adding, "We want people to be safe. My brother was in a clearly marked Chicago Police Department squad car when he was killed. No one is safe from drunk drivers."

A native of Cicero, Michael Gordon was an Eagle Scout who graduated from Morton West High School. He received his law enforcement degree from the College of DuPage and served in the United States Army in the late 1990s. When he was killed, he had been with the Chicago Police Department for two years. Further information about the Michael P. Gordon Foundation is available at www.michaelpgordon.org.

Free rides home from establishments within the participating towns will be available beginning at 11:00 p.m. on Tuesday, December 31 until 4:00 a.m. on Wednesday, January 1. Drivers will transport revelers home and not to other establishments.

"In 2013, nearly 200 people took advantage of this free service," said Orland Park Village Trustee Dan Calandriello, chair of the village's Public Safety Committee. "People who know that they're too impaired to drive on New Year's Eve should leave their cars where they are and call for a ride," he added.

Residents of the participating towns may call Stretch Limousine at 1-844-230-1637 to arrange for a free ride home during the designated hours on New Year's Eve.

"If you've had too much to drink on New Year's Eve, Safe Ride Home will do just that --- safely get you home," said Orland Park Police Chief Tim McCarthy.

The chief added, "Plan ahead now. Designate a driver for your holiday celebrations or if you know you're not able to drive on New Year's Eve, call the toll-free number. No questions asked. Just don't get behind the wheel of a car."