**ST. PATRICK’S DAY 2017   
SAMPLE OP ED**

**SOCIAL NORMING VERSION**

**This St. Patrick’s Day, Plan Before You Party!**

***Remember: Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving***

By **[Local Area Leader]**

St. Patrick’s Day has become one of the nation’s biggest times to celebrate and party. But unfortunately, too many people are taking to the roads after drinking alcohol. With the excitement of St. Patrick’s Day festivities, partygoers can find themselves “buzzed” after having a drink or two—and without a planned, sober ride home.

That’s why this St. Patrick’s Day season, **[State/Local Organization]** is working with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to reach all drivers with an important life-saving message and warning: *Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving.*

Tragically, March 17 has become a deadly holiday due to the number of drunk drivers on the roads. According to NHTSA, 25 percent of those who died in motor vehicle traffic crashes during the 2015 St. Patrick’s Day holiday period (6 p.m. March 16th – 5:59 a.m. March 18th) died in crashes involving a drunk driver.

In fact, 252 people nationwide lost their lives in drunk-driving-related crashes just during the St. Patrick’s Day holiday period from 2011 to 2015, with more than one-third dying in a crash where the driver had a blood alcohol concentration (BAC) well above the legal limit of .08.

NHTSA and **[State/Local Organization]** are hoping to change the way people think about drinking and driving, and help everyone realize that if they’re buzzed, they should not be driving.

Buzzed driving puts you and others on the road at risk of a crash—or worse, death. Even a little alcohol consumption can lead to poor decision-making and impairment that prevents you from safely operating a vehicle.

Many factors determine the effect alcohol has on your body, and it can vary from person to person. For many people, it doesn’t take much alcohol to become too impaired to drive.

Too many people wait until after they’ve started drinking to figure out how they will get home, but by then, it’s too late to make a clear-headed decision.

If you plan on drinking this St. Patrick’s Day, designate a sober driver before you start the party. Planning your ride ahead of time is one of the simplest ways to ensure you make it home safely. Call a taxi, a sober friend or family member, or **[insert your area’s shared ride specifics here]**.

Drinking after driving is deadly dangerous and never worth the risk.

Not only could you seriously injure or kill yourself or someone else, but if you are convicted of drunk driving, you face significant legal and financial consequences that include jail time, the loss of your driver’s license, higher insurance rates, attorney fees, court costs, car towing and repairs, and lost wages due to time off from work. Also, there’s the embarrassment, humiliation, and consequences of telling your family, friends and employers of your arrest.

Drivers convicted of DUI often make up excuses for why they got behind the wheel, but the reality is they failed to plan ahead. If you wait until you’ve been drinking to plan your sober ride, often it’s already too late.

The bottom line this St. Patrick’s Day: Plan Before You Party. Remember: *Buzzed Driving Is Drunk Driving.*

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