

The latest danger on the road: Drugged driving

Little debate that drunk driving is a major hazard among drivers young and old. But, welcome to 2012 and the newest dangerous trend on our roadways: Drugged Driving.

Simply put, Drugged Driving can be described as Alcohol Plus; it includes combining alcohol with illicit drugs - including marijuana - and the growing epidemic of prescription drug abuse.

Alcohol remains the most commonly abused drug among Lorain County youth - 52% of Lorain County high school seniors said they are current drinkers; 35% of 14-16-year-olds said they currently drink (sometime in the past 30 days). Sobering details for the youngest and least experienced of drivers who are already considered high risk for accidents. In 2007, motor vehicle crashes remain the leading cause of death for 15-19 year-olds nationwide.

Marijuana continues to be a growing problem among youth; one national study found a third of teens who drove after smoking marijuana said it didn't affect their driving.



However, marijuana affects judgment, perception, memory, poor-decision making - all problems impacting one's driving.

Prescription drug abuse among youth and adults is reaching epidemic proportions; 14% of Lorain County youth recently surveyed said they used medication not prescribed for them or they took more than prescribed to feel good or get high - that number increased to 31% of those over the age of 17%.

Combine alcohol, illicit drugs/prescription drug abuse, younger distracted drivers and the result is a very dangerous cocktail of risky behavior.

Distracted driving is also a growing

problem: The recent countywide survey found 17% of youth driving a car after drinking alcohol. Add in distracted driving 47% reported talking on their cell phone; 44% texted; 41% ate; 11% used the Internet on their cell phones; 10% used Facebook on their cell phone, and 6% applied makeup).

The Office of National Drug Control Policy has Drugged Driving on the radar as do we; Communities That Care of Lorain County, a countywide coalition working to prevent underage substance abuse, is launching information, education, and advocacy to prevent Drugged Driving.

You can visit us on Facebook; contact us for ways to use your Parent Power to prevent the problems and local programs about Drugged Driving. We're here to tackle the issue and we'd like you on our team.

For more information on Drugged Driving, contact Catherine Gabe, coordinator, Communities That Care of Lorain County; cgabe@lorainadas.org or 440-282-9920.