



## Column: Reward the designated driver

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One solution to the dangerous drinking problem that plagues State College would, of course, be an all out ban on the substance. Yet, we all know how well Prohibition worked in the 1920s.

Alcohol in and of itself is not the problem. It can be consumed and enjoyed without ill effect if done so responsibly. Problems occur when the substance is abused.

The most serious of these problems is drunk driving. With an intoxicated driver, a vehicle can become a weapon – a weapon, as we have seen in past years, that kills indiscriminately.

With more than 1,000 DUI arrests this past year, according to the Penn State Department of Public Information, the State College area has a problem.

One proposed solution to this problem nationwide has been to decide on a designated driver before going out. I like this idea, but I think it can be pushed further.

Being the designated driver oftentimes means drawing the short straw for that night. As the “double D,” you aren’t going to be able to get drunk with all of your friends and means, presumably, you won’t have a good time.

It’s a sacrifice one makes for the safety of his friends and the others on the road that night. Such a sacrifice should be rewarded.

And bars should be the ones doing the rewarding. Free non-alcoholic drinks for the designated driver all night and maybe throw in a free appetizer to boot.

Those who choose to be designated drivers know they are making a good decision, but let’s make it easier for them.

I can attest to this personally. The first time I went out with my friends as the designated driver, the waitress refused to let me pay for the soda that I drank that night. It was nice to not have to fork over cash on an already stretched budget.

It's not always like that, though, which is why the bars and restaurants of downtown State College should get together and agree to a uniform reward system for designated drivers.

In any kind of realistic plan, those who choose to be designated drivers should be marked by the bar in some semi-permanent fashion to make sure that the person keeps to his promise. It would also serve to make sure that the establishment that has been generous enough to consent to the free food and drink isn't being taken advantage of.

Of course the free drink and food doesn't have to be gourmet at all. Something like soda and nachos should suffice since one of the greatest joys as a college student is getting something for free.

This means that entering into such a program isn't really a financial burden on the bars and restaurants. And in the end, this gets students to take responsibility and be designated drivers for their friends.

Sometimes having a good time equals getting drunk. And sometimes having a good time is coming out of the night having not paid for a thing and keeping your friends safe.

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