

Safe Rides a savior for many on campus

Samaha Khanna

A&E Editor

11:23 p.m.: A girl wearing black platform boots scoots across the back seat of car No. 2.

"If it wasn't for Safe Rides, I would definitely drive drunk," she said. It's a Friday night, and this passenger, like many Elon students, is on her way to a party. She's also one of 3,531 students who have been transported to their destinations by Safe Rides since Aug. 25. Safe Rides is a student-run organization that offers students free rides around campus, no questions asked.

11:24 p.m.: The Safe Rides volunteer in car No. 2 uses a two-way radio to let headquarters know that the planned pickup was successful. Listening at the other end of the radio frequency is freshman Zachary Lauritzen.

Many Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights between the hours of 10 p.m. and 2:30 a.m., Lauritzen can be found at the dispatch desk in the Kernodle Center for Service Learning. One of six captains on the Safe Rides team, he answers calls and directs volunteers to students who need rides within a one-mile radius of campus.

A nondrinker, Lauritzen is in the minority on Elon's campus. This allows him to be a designated driver more often, he said.

"I had a friend in high school who said it was fun to drive [under the influence of drugs and alcohol] because it's like a game," Lauritzen said. "It really changed my perspective on drinking and driving."

Safe Rides was founded in 1992 when Elon football player Chad Macy was killed in a car accident as a result of driving under the influence. Safe Rides became one of more than 20 programs run through Elon's service learning program and Elon

Volunteers!. Similar programs are offered at numerous institutions across the country, including the University of Texas and the University of Georgia.

Student volunteers use their own cars and are paired with a volunteer passenger who communicates with the dispatch team via a CB, or citizens band, radio. Volunteers sign a confidentiality agreement to keep conversation with passengers impersonal and the identities of passengers confidential.

Students at many large universities are usually only left with the option of calling campus security if they need a ride home, according to Rachel Hitt, the program's coordinator. However, students at Elon should feel more comfortable calling Safe Rides because there is no risk of being cited for underage drinking, she said.

While Safe Rides' confidentiality agreement prevents volunteers from disclosing incriminating information about students, local police listen to the program's CB channel to find out where students are being picked up, Hitt said.

Hitt also emphasized that students who are drinking aren't the only people who call for rides.

"We want to make sure students feel comfortable calling us for whatever reason [they have], no questions asked," she said.

12:57 a.m.: Volunteers in car No. 2 stop at Moseley Center to take a break and get slices of the pizza Safe Rides has provided for volunteers. As they walk into the office, they hear one side of a call from an Elon senior whose ride was mistakenly given to another girl waiting at the same location. Sophomore volunteer Chris Morse apologizes

to the student, and she tells him to hurry up.

While some students take the program for granted, people are generally appreciative, Lauritzen said.

"But when it comes to the longevity of the program, it is hard to translate that appreciation into service hours," he said.

This semester, the program has struggled to expand its pool of repeat volunteers.

While 141 students signed up at interest meetings, a smaller number of volunteers have actually worked for the program, according to Hitt.

Safe Rides receives a yearly budget of about \$1,200 to pay for publicity, supplies and maintenance of its three CB radios.

According to Lori Boso, student coordinator of Elon Volunteers!, Safe Rides might use part of next year's budget to purchase green lights to better identify its vehicles.

2:14 a.m.: After 48 miles, a quarter-tank of gas and several trips around Elon's campus, volunteers from car No. 2 returned wearily to Moseley center. In four hours, two cars transported 130 students to their destinations.

"It was pretty fun, but I'm also really tired," said freshman Lindsay Porter, driver of car No. 2. "I never thought you could drive so many places in such a small vicinity, but apparently, it's entirely possible."

In addition to being tired, volunteers often commented on a feeling of satisfaction.

"Being a volunteer, you get to see that you're saving all these lives when you get the tally at the end of the night," Hitt said. "Over the long run, to look at that number, you get to see how much of an impact [the program] has."



SGA starts movie program

Alison Clark

Reporter

There is good news for movie buffs.

SGA and Belk Library staffs have agreed to increase the number of popular films offered to students, who will no longer be forced to endure long lines and checkout fees at local video stores.

SGA voted to provide \$1,000 to purchase bestselling videos, an amount to be matched by the library.

The videos will be placed with the library's existing film collection. "There will be more films here for students to check out without having to go to Blockbuster to rent them," said Kate Hickey, director of Belk Library.

Although there will be a smaller selection than at commercial rental stores, they will be free for students, Hickey said.

However, the intention is not for the library to compete with commercial chains.

"I think students will take advantage of the new movies in the library," junior Melissa Meiskey said. "We all need time to relax and the library is a convenient place to get a movie."

Most of the videos in the library now are classics or award-winners.

The selections range from "A Midsummer Night's Dream" to "Dracula" and circulate regularly.

The new videos and DVDs can be checked out with Phoenix cards. Borrowing time is three days and late fees will be the same for overdue books: 5 cents per day. If a student has overdue materials, he or she cannot check out anything else.

If students loses a video, they will have to pay the replacement cost as well as a processing fee.

"We generally will buy only one copy of a movie," Hickey said. "One thousand dollars will buy about 50 videos."

Junior Kristen Menz said she thinks the new project "is a great way for students to access up-to-date media sources at no cost and to use the library for personal use rather than strictly academic reasons."

The selection of titles will be chosen by SGA and will conform to the library's staff's guidelines.

SGA representative Darris Means will be in Mosley between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m. every Thursday asking students what types of videos they would like to see in the library.

"We really want student input and a diverse opinion on the movies," Means said.

The idea for the project originated from an SGA member about a year ago.

"It is an inexpensive way to get movies," Means said, "and it will help people on campus who don't have cars."

