

GET HOME SAFELY

COMPANY magazine GET HOME SAFELY AWARDS 2009

Company magazine has been campaigning to get you home safely for over ten years now. This month, we launch our first-ever Get Home Safely Awards, heaping praise on the people making your Saturday nights out safer...

WINNER 2009

TORBAY STREET PASTORS The guardian angels of the streets...

As Amy, 22, tottered down a dark side-road in her four-inch heels, chattering to a friend on her mobile, she didn't notice the man following her. Like hundreds of young women on a Saturday night, she'd been out on the town and lost her friends. Deciding to save on the cab fare, she chose to walk home instead. Being in her hometown of Torbay, Devon, where she partied most weekends, made Amy feel safe. And on this particular night, Amy was safe. At the top of the road she saw four people, who asked if she was OK, sending the lurking man running off into the darkness.

The two men and two women who came to Amy's rescue were part of a nationwide initiative whereby church volunteers, known as Street Pastors, patrol busy nightspots between 10pm-4am on Fridays and Saturdays. Running in over 100 towns across the UK, including Glasgow, Swansea, Northampton and Bath, Torbay's Street Pastor scheme is one of the best. It has been running less than two years but already has 66 volunteers, and trainee Street Pastors are sent to Torbay from all over the UK to learn

the ropes. Co-ordinator Ros Ede says, "We patrol the streets looking for vulnerable-looking people who might need help. We hand out Spikey stoppers to protect against drink-spiking, bottled water for people who are drunk, and flip flops for women who'd otherwise be walking barefoot. We even pick up broken bottles and call taxis for stranded women."

Zoe Yates, 31, a childminder from Torbay, explains why she decided to join the scheme, "Like most young women, I love a good night out. But I also find it rewarding to make sure other women's nights don't end in disaster. Some taxi firms refuse to take women if they're too trollied, so we sit with them until they sober up, then make sure someone is at home to pay their fare. I've seen bouncers carry girls out of pubs unconscious and dump them on the pavement. There are hidden dangers everywhere for women, even in busy, well-lit areas. I once saw a girl leave a pub drunk and a stranger tried to get into her taxi. It's terrifying when you think about what could happen if we weren't there." And thank goodness they are – they're worthy winners in our eyes.

● Visit www.streetpastors.org.uk for more information

And the runners-up are...



MUM'S TAXIS, NOTTINGHAM

Cab drivers with a difference

When Jeegisha Dinnall, 35, was stranded one evening in October 2008 and every cab firm told her there were no taxis available, she stumbled upon the idea of Mum's Taxis. She explains, "That night, I got home thanks to a kind taxi-firm owner, who sent his wife to pick me up. I felt safer with a female driver so, wanting to help other young women, I set up a female-only taxi service called Mum's Taxis. I now employ seven female drivers." And the women of Nottingham couldn't be more grateful, as Victoria, 22, a marketing assistant from the city, explains: "A friend of mine recently had a lucky escape after being threatened with a knife by a male taxi driver demanding oral sex. Now I prefer using a female cabbie." Proof that one number you should *always* have in your phone is a registered local taxi firm. In Nottingham, mum clearly is the word.

● Visit www.mums-taxis.com for details



GLASGOW'S TAXI MARSHALS

Stewards to keep you safe

Since it launched in 2005, Glasgow's Nite Zone project, including a taxi marshalling scheme, has helped over a million people get home safely after a night out. Willie Caie, community and safety manager, says, "Glasgow had real problems coping with the volume of people trying to get home late at night, so we decided to employ taxi marshals to help lone women into taxis and stop any fights or alcohol-related incidents breaking out." And it's worked. In a nine-month period, Nite Zone sees an average of 140,000 people in Glasgow's Gordon Street and more than 82,000 people in Sauchiehall Street safely into taxis. Diana, 25, a PR consultant from Glasgow, is just one grateful clubber. She says, "My sister and I were verbally abused by a drunk outside Glasgow Central station while waiting for a cab one night. He was loud, smelly and aggressive, but the Nite Zone steward ushered us into the first taxi and we were home before coming to any harm. They made me feel safe by just being there." Diana and her sister aren't the only ones who've benefited. With alcohol-fuelled offences in the city centre having dropped by over 30% and violent crime falling by more than 23% since the scheme began, it's no wonder that, as well as being crowned one of *Company's* Get Home Safely heroes, the Nite Zone project also won Glasgow City Council's Flourish Award for Excellence this year. Bravo.

● Visit www.glasgowcitycouncil.co.uk for more information



SOS BUS, NORWICH

All aboard the big yellow bus!

Every weekend between 9pm and 3am on the Prince Of Wales Road in Norwich, you'll find a yellow bus manned by eight volunteers, including two St John Ambulance members. Colin Lang, the original project manager, explains, "We wanted to create a safe haven in the heart of the city's nightlife, so we set up the SOS Bus eight years ago, after three people died in accidents while drunk. Two bodies were found in the river and one in a nightclub toilet cubicle." Looking at the cold, hard facts, it's clear to see the bus really is the difference between life and death. Medical student Claire Small, 22, from Buckinghamshire, volunteers on the SOS Bus. She tells

"Whether a woman has lost her friends, missed her train home or just wants a place to stay warm, she can sit with us while we work things out over a cuppa. We have a mini bus offering lifts to people like a girl we recently found, who'd been kicked out of a club after losing her mobile and had no idea how she was going to make her four-mile journey home. Who knows what could have happened if we hadn't been there?" And, if the worst does happen, thanks to a new medical bus introduced as part of the scheme last November, people have somewhere to go if they need treatment for injuries. It's no wonder the SOS Bus won The Queen's Award for Voluntary Service in 2005, which led to over ten more nationwide schemes. And now it's scooped a *Company* Get Home Safely award, too!

● Visit www.sosbus.co.uk for details



GWENT'S PINK HANDBAG CAMPAIGN

The new night-out accessory

No, it's not a Paris Hilton-designed clubbing bag. It's your party help guide. Since 2007, police in Gwent, Wales, have been distributing Pink Handbag leaflets at bars, clubs and universities. These contain local taxi numbers, bus timetables and warnings about drink-spiking. One local welcoming the scheme is Rachel Husband, 23, an assistant brand manager from Newport. She says, "The area can be rough late at night, so you can feel unsafe. The taxi ranks are spread out, so my friends and I could get stranded without a taxi or policeman in sight." That was until last November, when Gwent police also set up Cab Safe – an attempt to stamp out unlicensed taxis. Women like Rachel can now send a text (costing 50p) and the system pinpoints their location and texts back with contact numbers for the nearest licensed cab rank. Check your local council website for similar text-a-cab services operating in your hometown.

● Visit www.gwentpa.police.uk for more information

BEST OF THE REST:

LONDON: Since Transport For London's Safer Travel at Night (STaN) scheme introduced the Cabwise text service in 2002, the capital has seen a 44% drop in cab-related sexual offences and a 15% drop in women using illegal mini cabs. Visit www.tfl.gov.uk/cabwise

WORCESTER: First-aiders hand out emergency flip flops, rape alarms, Spikey stoppers and emergency blankets every Friday night from 11pm-4am. Plus, the University of Worcester organises taxis for students. Visit www.thesafespaceworcester.btk.com

SOUTHAMPTON: During National Alcohol Awareness Week (19-23 October), the clubs, bars and shops of Southampton will hand out personal alarms and purse-sized safety information cards. Visit www.southampton.gov.uk

MANCHESTER: The Printworks complex of bars, restaurants and cinemas sends Bluetooth messages to party-goers, with information on night buses, which run to ten different areas of Greater Manchester until 3.30am. Visit www.gmpte.com/buses/nightbus.cfm

BURNLEY: A nurse and a police officer are always on duty at the Retreat N Recover Centre, to help stranded women get home or to sit with them until they sober up. Visit www.burnley.gov.uk

● Tell us about Get Home Safely schemes in your area and nominate them for next year's awards. Post your suggestions on www.company.co.uk or email company.mail@natmags.co.uk

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