



# NO PLACE TO HESITATE

Alcohol poisoning deaths are preventable . . . if teens know they can call 911

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Photo by Fiona McCracken

The nightly news is no stranger to the story of an underage drinker who went too far. Timothy Piazza. Samantha Spady. Noah Domingo. Dalton Debrick. Julia Gonzalez. Although all from different parts of the nation, these names have one thing in common: all of these kids might have lived if someone had the courage to call 911.

While Trinity educates the student body about the dangers of drug and alcohol use with a yearly visit from the FCD, or Freedom from Chemical Dependency, our curriculum should go a step farther and help parents start conversations about what to do if a friend under the influence needs medical help.

Under Florida statute 562.112, underage drinkers can call for medical help without being subject to arrest, charge, prosecution and penalization. This means a teen can call 911 seeking medical help for a friend involved in underage drinking without being charged with a crime.

Regardless of personal beliefs about alcohol, teens deserve to know their legal rights.

Although the school should always discourage teen drinking, safety should be the first priority. If we are already talking about the dangers of drinking in Health and Wellness, it only makes sense to cover content as crucial to safety as alcohol amnesty laws.

Trinity already acknowledges the possibility of teen drinking with an impactful mock DUI; the conversation has already been started, so it's now time to extend the dialogue in order to give teens the resources to save a life if they are ever met with a dangerous situation.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism found that 60 percent of 18-year-olds have had at least one drink. Even if Trinity students are all in the 40 percent, students should still have the skillset to help others in need. Alcohol poisoning protocol should be just as common as learning CPR.

Even when we educate students on their legal protection, fear of parental punishment still promotes hesitation to seek help. Under the rare circumstance that a rational adult would prioritize penalizing a teen for underage

drinking over the safety of a minor, students still need to have enough honor to risk getting in trouble if it means possibly saving the life of a friend or even a stranger.

It is not exclusively the responsibility of the school, parent or student to start the dialogue about emergency protocol in dangerous situations, but rather a collective one.

Trinity parent Nathalie Steinberg said that students should feel comfortable seeking help.

"If an underage person finds themselves in a situation where they are drinking and they cannot take care of themselves, they should call a parent or someone they trust ASAP," Steinberg said. "Nothing good happens when you are intoxicated and can't think."

Putting effective safety strategies in place doesn't promote underage drinking, but it does give resources when other prevention methods don't work.

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism sampled 800 students. Half admitted to blacking out from alcohol. While we need to first make an effort to limit this number, we also need to be prepared to know how to save a friend in need.

Adrienne Battle, a speaker for the FCD, said that students should be getting help.

"Most people wake up when they pass out, but some of them don't," Battle said. "Why take that chance?"

