



SundayCT

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'One decision can change lives'

Nonprofit honoring Farmington teen teams with Uber to expand education about impaired driving

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HARTFORD COURANT

The Luke Roux Foundation has taken a big step forward in its mission to reduce fatalities caused by impaired driving.

This week, the Farmington-based nonprofit announced a partnership

with Uber Technologies, Inc. The alliance has the goal of expanding the reach of the Luke Roux Foundation's SafeGrad SafeRide education program, which educates high school students on the importance of making responsible choices and the real-world consequences of impaired driving.

Steve and Carri Roux are co-founders of the foundation, which was created in the memory of their son, Luke, who was killed by a drunken driver just 10 days after graduating from Farmington High School in June 2022.

"What happened to Luke, it could have been prevented, so that's why we're here to make sure it doesn't happen to you or



Luke Roux

someone you love, to someone's Luke," Carri Roux said. "And while education and awareness have been around for so many years, we're trying to do something with focusing on planning ahead and providing a tangible tool.

And we'd like to keep doing it for as long as we have the support to keep doing it. And that's why this is exciting to have national support

from Uber."

The partnership will help spread the work of the foundation beyond Connecticut. Through an Uber social impact grant, the Luke Roux Foundation can offer more high schools the option to register for its SafeGrad SafeRide Program for the graduating class.

The initial talks with Uber began in the fall. Carri Roux said she met

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Kristin Smith, the Head of Global Road Safety Policy at Uber, while at an impaired driving advocacy mission tech expo in Washington, D.C.

"I was able to have some time with her, and I told her about our foundation and just I mentioned our SafeGrad SafeRide Program, which she thought was pretty exciting and she was impressed by our local efforts," Carri Roux said.

"I followed up with her a few months later, and she was able to offer us a micro grant, which gives us the ability to take our program further, broaden our reach, have more impact and thereby saving more lives," she added.

Carri Roux said the Luke Roux Foundation has distributed more than 1,500 vouchers for ride-booking services to graduating high school seniors over the last three years. With the collaboration with Uber, the foundation is hoping to reach an additional 2,000 students in 2026.

"Preventing impaired driving requires a combination of education, access and commu-

nity partnership," Smith said in a statement. "By supporting the Luke Roux Foundation's SafeGrad SafeRide program, we're helping equip young people with practical tools and real-world options that make safer choices easier. Expanding access to reliable rides can play a meaningful role in reducing impaired driving incidents and saving lives."

The foundation's SafeGrad SafeRide education program started with one school in 2023 for its presentation. In the second year of the program, it was presented at two schools. Last year, it presented at four and have a goal of doubling to eight schools in 2026.

Farmington High School and Northwest Catholic have been two consistent partners for the program over the years. Roux said the program has two other soft commitments and four others that have shown interest this year.

The presentations are conducted during school assemblies built around the power of personal storytelling.

"I share Luke's story with high school students in a real and honest way, helping them

understand how one decision can change lives forever and how their choices matter," Carri Roux said. "It started as that small effort. But now, we're growing it into a broader program with the storytelling, and the practical tool of the safeguard safe ride voucher we leave with each graduate.

"I think it's something that they will remember," she added. "I've been told by a couple of students that they never heard a story shared so personally and that made the risks feel real. I've been told it was not like any other school presentation they've ever been a part of before. I've gotten plenty of hugs and some with a few tears after the program was over."

Carri Roux added that one student came up to her after a presentation and told her he wouldn't take his car to college for his freshman year because of her words.

Steve Roux said their foundation's message is unique from "Don't Drink and Drive" messages over the last several decades. Their focus is on planning ahead and making Uber arrangements to the event and setting up the ride home through Uber before

drinking starts.

"That young man decided not to take his car to college with him. That was sort of the ultimate planning ahead scenario that our message is slightly different from the typical 'don't drink and drive' message," Steve Roux said. "Ours is really all about don't put yourself in a position where you might drink and drive or where you might be in the car with someone who's been drinking.

"A lot of these kids, hopefully, haven't been drinking in high school," he said. "It's a great message for them as they continue to mature in life and are put into situations in college. There's just a lot of planning that has to happen ahead of time to really make sure that you don't put yourself in that position. I just want to make sure that somehow that can kind of be called out here. It is a message with the same desired outcome, but one where we really are kind of harping on that message of planning ahead."

The vouchers are for graduates for a ride on their Uber account.

"So now they have a ride-share account on their phone as they prepare for this next

chapter of their lives," Carri Roux said. "We encourage them to save their voucher for a time where they may need a safe ride home. It's not just a safe ride for them, but also for their friends. We stress the importance of not waiting until you are impaired to figure out how to get home. They're moving into the next stage of their life where they're making more decisions on their own, that they have this tool on their phone providing a sense of security knowing that if I get to a situation, I have a way out of it."

The Luke Roux Foundation is also offering a \$1,500 scholarship for a high school senior in Connecticut. The One Choice Can Change Everything schol-

arship will be awarded to the student who creates the most compelling and original public service announcement video focused on preventing impaired driving among young adults.

"The more students out there that think about this topic and create videos about this topic, the more impact we'll have throughout the state," Carri Roux said.

Schools interested in hosting a presentation can email saferide@lukeroux.com. The foundation asks schools to have a proposed date, location, size of graduating class and confirmation of a 45-minute time block.



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