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## Safety and respect: community partners take St. Patrick's Day messages door-to-door in Waterloo

WATERLOO – Be smart. Stay safe. Show respect. These are the simple, yet essential, messages that community partners are promoting to encourage safe and responsible St. Patrick's Day celebrations. From doorknockers to posters, the message is clear: have fun, but be safe, show respect and play by the rules.

The City of Waterloo – including Waterloo Fire Rescue and municipal enforcement – is again working with the Waterloo Regional Police Service (WRPS), the Region of Waterloo Paramedic Services, Wilfrid Laurier University, the Wilfrid Laurier University Students' Union, the University of Waterloo and the University of Waterloo Federation of Students to ensure the safety of those participating in local St. Patrick's Day festivities, which traditionally take place March 17.

This year's efforts build on the success of last year's safety campaign, which saw a decrease in reported incidents.

Over the years, St. Patrick's Day celebrations have grown in size, with participants gathering on Ezra Street in Waterloo. For the second year running, a privately organized event in a licensed tent on Seagram Drive will mean significantly fewer people on the street, but public safety remains the top priority.

The community partners will again take to the streets in student-led door-knocker campaign March 10 from 7-9 p.m. Students, along with university and community partner officials, will be spreading safety messages and specific tips from police, fire and municipal enforcement that range from "don't drink and drive" and "false fire alarms can result in an invoice from Waterloo Fire Rescue" to the dollar figures for municipal fines associated with excessive noise, littering and excess garbage. The overarching peer-to-peer message will be one of respect, with students handing out posters to place in windows that read, "respect" and "be golden."

"We are educating students about their roles as Waterloo residents, and educating property owners about their responsibilities," said Allan Seabrooke, commissioner, community services at the City of Waterloo.

There is no licensed street event, and the consumption of alcohol is not permitted in unlicensed public areas.

"We look forward to connecting with residents and encouraging patrons to behave responsibly," said Alana Holtom, spokesperson for the Waterloo Regional Police Service. "Our message is simple – celebrate safely, follow the law, and respect the community."

Waterloo fire and municipal enforcement officials have met with property owners and are encouraging those participating to celebrate responsibly.

"We are here to make sure that the day is a safe one," said Richard Hepditch, fire chief at Waterloo Fire Rescue. "We'd like to remind people to keep the centre of the roads clear in the event that emergency service vehicles need to respond."

While the messages reach local students directly, festivities increasingly attract participants from out of town. Students are therefore encouraged to share messages of safety and respect with visitors. This year, St. Patrick's Day also falls during March break, which may increase the likelihood that high school students may attend. Officials coordinated with school boards to extend the safety messages to high schools and are reminding parents to be diligent that day.

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Wilfrid Laurier University, the University of Waterloo and their student unions are partnering in the collaborative efforts to promote safety messages.

"Laurier is pleased to work closely with the City of Waterloo and our community partners in planning and promoting a safe St. Patrick's Day," said Leanne Holland Brown, dean of students for Wilfrid Laurier University's Waterloo campus. "First and foremost, we expect students to attend regularly scheduled classes. For those outside of class, we place the highest priority on student and community safety and demonstrating respect for our neighbours, enforcement officers and each other."

"Given that St. Patrick's Day seems to have a unique place on the calendar of some students, we want to make efforts to ensure their safety, as well as the safety of our local community," said Chris Read, associate provost, students at the University of Waterloo.

Laurier student groups are hosting an education event in advance of St. Patrick's Day to discuss safe and responsible behaviour around alcohol. Laurier's EcoHawks and the University of Waterloo's Waterloo Crime Awareness Team (WCAT) will perform a neighbourhood cleanup on March 18. They will meet at 10 a.m. at the Bricker Academic Building. Media are welcome.

The WRPS received the Community Safety and Crime Prevention Award from the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police for their community safety operational plan, and the City of Waterloo won a MarCom International Platinum Award and an EDCO provincial marketing award honourable mention for the collaborative St. Patrick's Day safety marketing campaign.

Partners will be promoting safety tips on Twitter using #spd2015. For more information about safety tips, please visit [waterloo.ca/stpaddyswr](http://waterloo.ca/stpaddyswr).

Members of the media are welcome to follow the doorknocker campaign and can confirm their participation with Megan Harris at [megan.harris@waterloo.ca](mailto:megan.harris@waterloo.ca).

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