

# Building Safe Communities

A Publication of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration



October/November 1997

Volume I: Number 2

## EXPANDING PARTNERSHIPS FOR SAFE COMMUNITIES

American traffic safety is one of the great injury prevention success stories. The rate of motor vehicle-related fatalities is at a historic low. But, as Ricardo Martinez, National Highway Traffic Safety Administrator (NHTSA) points out, the easy gains have been made. We now face more difficult challenges, including people who still refuse to wear seat belts and drivers who continue to drink and drive.

We also have unique opportunities—opportunities that come from working with new partners who can reach new audiences in new ways. This issue of BSC highlights national initiatives that move beyond the old way of doing business and create new partnerships that can provide ideas, opportunities, and resources to Safe Communities coalitions.

## IN THIS ISSUE

Expanding Partnerships for Safe Communities .....	page 1
Buckle-Up America .....	page 1
Partners in Progress .....	page 2
Partnership for a Walkable America .....	page 2
Roadway Safety Foundation .....	page 3
Safe Communities Cooperative Agreements .....	page 3
Partnering with Business .....	page 3
Managed Care and Safe Communities ..	page 4
Partnering with Public Health .....	page 5
Safe Communities Calendar .....	page 5
Safe Communities on the World Wide Web .....	page 6
Resources .....	page 6

## BUCKLE-UP AMERICA

Using a seat belt is the most effective way that people can protect themselves from being injured in a motor vehicle crash, yet only 68 percent of Americans regularly use seat belts while driving or riding in motor vehicles. In

January 1997, President Clinton directed the Secretary of Transportation to develop a plan for increasing the use of seat belts. This plan, *Presidential Initiative for Increasing Seat Belt Use Nationwide: Recommendations from the Secretary of Transportation*, set national goals to increase seat belt use to 85 percent by 2000 and 90 percent by 2005 and reduce child occupant fatalities 15 percent by 2000 and 25 percent by 2005.

The plan also recognized the importance of using partnerships “to help America reach its potential of saving lives and preventing injuries.”

Ten months later, Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater and NHTSA Administrator Richard

Martinez, M.D., hosted a nationally televised meeting to energize partnerships in support of the *Presidential Initiative*. They also announced the publication of the *Buckle-Up America: There's Just Too Much to Lose Campaign Kit*. This folio contains strategies and messages, logo sheets, sample press releases, public service announcements, sample op-ed pieces, and other resources. Copies



are available from NHTSA Regional Offices. The *Presidential Initiative* is available on the World Wide Web at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/airbags/presbelt/](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/airbags/presbelt/), or from Karen Scott at (202) 366-9567.

*Building Safe Communities* is funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, United States Department of Transportation, produced in cooperation with the Institute for Healthcare Improvement, and published by Education Development Center, Inc.

This publication may be reproduced in full for further noncommercial distribution.

Editor: Marc Posner  
Research: Alison Dana  
Graphic Design: Jonathan Bruce  
Project Director: Chris Miara

*Building Safe Communities* is available on the World Wide Web at [www.edc.org/HHD/csn/bsc/](http://www.edc.org/HHD/csn/bsc/).

**Building Safe Communities**  
Education Development Center, Inc.  
55 Chapel Street  
Newton, MA 02158-1060  
☎ (617) 969-7101, ext. 2351  
Fax: (617) 527-4096  
E-mail: [marcp@edc.org](mailto:marcp@edc.org)

## PARTNERS IN PROGRESS

Despite some recent gains, drinking and driving remains a national tragedy. In 1996, more than 17,000 Americans were killed and more than 300,000 were injured in alcohol-related crashes.

As a step toward ending this epidemic of impaired driving, NHTSA convened *Partners in Progress: National Impaired Driving Goals and Strategies for 2005*, a 1995 event at which representatives from government, law enforcement, business, criminal justice, and advocacy groups endorsed the goal of reducing alcohol-related traffic deaths to 11,000 per year by 2005. More recently, NHTSA released *Partners in Progress: An Impaired Driving Guide for Action*, a publication highlighting effective strategies to reduce impaired driving in seven areas: public education, individual responsibility, the health care community, business and employment, legislation, enforcement and adjudication, and technology.

Valerie Gompf, NHTSA Highway Safety Specialist, points out that the Partners in Progress campaign and the Safe Communities model have much in common. Both use data to identify problems and set goals, and both involve partnerships that transcend the traditional pairing of traffic safety and law enforcement to include the medical, public health, and business communities, among others. She encourages Safe Communities coalition members to “examine their local data and, if it shows that impaired driving is a problem, set their own local goals to reduce impaired driving. Only action at the community level can help us reach the national goal.”



*Partners in Progress: Impaired Driving Guide for Action* is available from the Office of Communications and Outreach, NHTSA, NTS-21, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590, or by faxing a request to (202) 493-2062.

## PARTNERSHIP FOR A WALKABLE AMERICA

Traffic injuries are not restricted to people in cars—they also take a toll on those outside the vehicle. In the United States, a pedestrian is injured every 6 minutes and killed every 97 minutes. The *Partnership for a Walkable America* (PWA) is committed to reducing the number of pedestrians killed or injured in collisions with motor vehicles. The PWA is an alliance of organizations, agencies, businesses, and individuals that have joined together to make walking safer, to create “walkable” communities, and to promote walking as a way to improve health and lower health care costs. The *Partnership for a Walkable America* can provide valuable resources and information to Safe Communities coalitions. For more information, contact the *Partnership for a Walkable America*, c/o The National Safety Council, 1121 Spring Lake Drive, Itasca, IL 60143, (630) 285-1121.



## ROADWAY SAFETY FOUNDATION

The physical characteristics of roads, including design, signage, and lighting, are of the utmost importance to highway safety, but these issues can be intimidating to those without training in engineering. The Roadway Safety Foundation (RSF) is a non-profit organization whose mission is to reduce the frequency and severity of motor vehicle crashes by improving the road



characteristics that affect safety. RSF Executive Director Kathy Hoffman says "One of our major goals is to present the results of the cutting edge of roadway design research in ways that people, like the people in Safe Communities coalitions, can use. We want to give people the tools they need to work with engineers and local transportation agencies to make roadway design changes. We want to build grassroots support for roadway improvements by educating the public on roadway hazards like poor lighting or roadside obstructions."

For more information on RSF and its activities, contact Kathy Hoffman, Executive Director, Roadway Safety Foundation, American Highway Users Alliance, 1776 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone (202) 857-1200; fax (202) 857-1230.

## SAFE COMMUNITIES COOPERATIVE AGREEMENTS

NHTSA has awarded two discretionary cooperative agreements to be used in demonstrating and evaluating the effectiveness of the Safe Communities approach. One agreement, awarded to the Providence Safe Communities Partnership (through Rhode Island Hospital), will focus on reducing traffic-related injuries in inner-city neighborhoods. A second agreement, awarded to the Anchorage Safe Communities Program (housed at Providence Alaska Medical Center), will focus on several issues, including impaired driving, pedestrian safety, and youth.

## PARTNERING WITH BUSINESS: THE TEXAS INSTRUMENT EXAMPLE

Many corporations pride themselves on low on-the-job injury rates. However, what often goes unrecognized is the cost of off-the-job injuries. Motor vehicle crashes cost American business \$55 billion every year. Texas Instruments (TI) understands this cost and is working to lower it.

An analysis of health data and attendance records at TI corporate headquarters in Dallas revealed that workers were almost twice as likely to be injured away from the workplace as on the job. An employee survey disclosed that motor vehicle crashes were a leading cause of off-the-job injuries resulting in lost work days. TI turned to the Greater Dallas Injury Prevention Center (GDIPC) for assistance in improving off-the-job safety for its employees, their families, and their communities; TI soon became the first GDIPC corporate sponsor.

The key to corporate involvement in traffic safety, according to Greg Durham, TI Safety Specialist, is demonstrating that it is worth the time and effort. He suggests that "Safe Communities coalitions need to understand that what is important to business is the bottom line. Will they be able to see a return on their investment? Coalitions need to help corporations show measurable results in terms of increased productivity and decreased medical costs."

TI hopes to be able to demonstrate within the next two years that participation in Safe Communities coalitions reduces off-the-job injuries (and medical costs) to its employees. But TI is not waiting until then to take further action: In partnership with the GDIPC, TI is initiating Safe Communities coalitions in two additional communities in which TI facilities are located. We hope to bring you reports on these programs in the future.



Greg Durham

## MANAGED CARE AND SAFE COMMUNITIES

Managed care organizations need no introduction to the concept of prevention. Disease prevention is one of their central goals, both to preserve the wellness of their members and to reduce the cost of providing health care services. Since injuries affect members' health as well as driving up costs, it is little wonder that managed care providers are becoming enthusiastic Safe Communities partners. Anita Berg, of Allina Health Systems, a managed care provider in Minnesota, reports that "The message coming out of NHTSA is that traffic crashes are preventable events. That really resonates with us. Safe Communities truly supports Allina's mission to work closely with the community on health improvement."



Allina's community focus is evident in its effort to create a Safe Communities coalition in a rural area on the edge of the Twin Cities. Berg explains that "Allina has a strong presence in this community. We run a community hospital; clinics; and home care, wheelchair, and ambulatory services. We have an ambulance service and provide 911 emergency response. Allina has a fair number of members in the area. So we looked at some traffic data to see if there was an opportunity to make some changes." The data revealed a preponderance of injuries and fatalities on single-lane highways where speeds exceed 55 mph, and high rates of crashes on snowy roads involving younger, inexperienced drivers. Allina's Safe Communities coalition partners—including the county commissioner, sheriff, police chief, hospital administrator, and representatives from the school district and county engineers office—will work together to reduce these injuries.

Allina is not the only managed care organization taking an active role as a Safe Communities partner. The Community Benefits Program of the Tufts Health Plan works with community organizations in Lawrence, Massachusetts, to address underage impaired driving. Tufts staff serves as a resource for technical expertise; they are also conveners, bringing together a broad spectrum of partners, including the Governor's Highway Safety Bureau; the superintendent of education; local business leaders; the greater Lawrence Family Health Center; Lawrence General Hospital; the police and fire departments; and other health care institutions, youth programs, and city agencies. Matthew Siegel of the Tufts Health Plan says that "Our strength as a managed care organization is our ability to link and coordinate resources in our catchment communities. Safe Communities is an ideal opportunity to address the problem of motor vehicle injuries by helping the key players in our community work together."



In Las Vegas, Nevada, a Safe Communities program sponsored by Sierra Health Services is working to reduce injuries to Sierra's employees, as well as employees of the companies to whom Sierra provides coverage. An examination of Sierra's own data resulted in a program to reduce on-the-job motor vehicle injuries to employees of their Home Health



Care Division. In addition, Sierra is working with Mirage Casinos to prevent pedestrian injuries to workers walking to and from parking sites; Nevada Power to reduce traffic injuries to its drivers; and the Clark County Classroom Teachers Association to address pedestrian safety for children entering and exiting school buses. The community-outreach component of these programs is being implemented in cooperation with the Clark County Safe Communities Coalition.

## PARTNERING WITH PUBLIC HEALTH

In the words of the landmark 1989 report *Injury Prevention: Meeting the Challenge*, "Injury is a public health problem because of its magnitude and because of its consequences for the health of Americans. Traffic injuries alone have produced more fatalities than all the wars in which the United States has fought, combined." Safe Communities provides an important opportunity to expand the role of public health in promoting traffic safety.

Public health agencies have much to offer Safe Communities. They have expertise in using data to identify and prevent injuries. They have experience in health care delivery systems and evaluation. They have access to and credibility among important target populations, the result of years of participation in WIC programs, immunization campaigns, and other community-based initiatives.

The powerful role that public health agencies can play in injury prevention programs is amply demonstrated in *On the Road to Safety: Strategies and Resources for Traffic Safety in the Community*, a short book describing projects implemented by local health departments with small grants from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). The case studies include a project to reduce the number of pedestrian injuries among school children in Chatham County, Georgia; a Syracuse, New York, program providing driver education to recent immigrants; and a Nebraska program encouraging safe driving by teenagers on rural roads. *On the Road to Safety* is available from NACCHO, 440 First Street, NW, Suite 450, Washington, DC 20001. Telephone (202) 783-1583.



## SAFE COMMUNITIES CALENDAR

December is National Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention Month. The *National Drunk and Drugged (3D) Prevention Program Planner: Putting Together the Pieces of Safe Communities* contains materials and resources for implementing 3D Prevention Month activities, including a Resource Guide and fact sheets. To obtain a copy, write to the Office of Communications and Outreach, NHTSA, NTS-21, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590, or fax a request to (202) 493-2062. The latest news on 3D Prevention Activities can be found on the 3D Prevention Month Coalition Web site at <[www.3dmonth.org](http://www.3dmonth.org)>.

By the time you read this, the Department of Transportation's national Moving Kids Safely: Strengthening Safe Communities conference will be part of traffic safety history. But you need not despair if you missed this event. In February, 1998, the DOT and NHTSA will bring Moving Kids Safely to your community. These regional events will focus on the safe transportation of children and foster new and expanded partnerships. The dates and locations of these meetings, as well as the NHTSA contact who can provide more information, are below:



### February 10, 1998

Jacksonville, Fla.: Connie Beasley, (404) 562-3739  
Chicago, Ill.: Randy Bolin, (708) 503-8822  
Kansas City, Mo.: Susan de Courcy, (816) 822-7233  
Denver, Colo.: Bob Weltzer, (303) 969-6917

### February 11, 1998

Albany, N.Y.: Jerry Palisi, (914) 682-3427  
Sacramento, Calif.: Joe Cindrick, (415) 744-3084

## Building Safe Communities

Education Development Center, Inc.  
55 Chapel Street  
Newton, MA 02158-1060

Non-profit Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Boston, Massachusetts  
Permit No. 58241



### SAFE COMMUNITIES ON THE WORLD WIDE WEB

The Safe Communities Service Center Web site is an expanding source of information and resources for those involved in Safe Communities programs and other traffic safety efforts. It can be found at <[www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/outreach/safecomm/ServiceCenter/default.asp](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/outreach/safecomm/ServiceCenter/default.asp)>.

Back issues of *Building Safe Communities* and links to other online traffic safety resources can be found on the BSC Web site at <[www.edc.org/HHD/csn/bsc/](http://www.edc.org/HHD/csn/bsc/)>. Color or camera-ready black-and-white copies of BSC (as well as its predecessor, *Building Bridges Between Traffic Safety and Public Health*) can be printed from this site, for those of you who wish to further distribute this publication.

### RESOURCES

*Creating Your Safe Community* describes steps for developing injury prevention programs based on the WHO Safe Communities model. Available for \$10.00 from the Safe Communities Foundation, 64 Charles Street East, Suite #201, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M4Y 1T1. Telephone (416) 964-0008; fax (416) 964-0089; e-mail <[info@safecommunities.ca](mailto:info@safecommunities.ca)>; WWW <[www.safecommunities.ca](http://www.safecommunities.ca)>.

*Safe Ride News* is a quarterly newsletter covering child occupant, bicycle, and pedestrian safety issues. Available for \$39 a year from Safe Ride News, 117 E. Louisa Street, Box 290, Seattle, WA 98102. Telephone (206) 364-5696; fax (206) 364-5992; e-mail <[saferide@twbc.com](mailto:saferide@twbc.com)>.

