

Building Safe Communities

A Publication of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration



October/November 1998

Volume 2: Number 1

PREVENTING IMPAIRED DRIVING

DETECTING UNDERAGE DRINKING IN LANCASTER COUNTY

While enormous progress has been made in the fight against impaired driving, much remains to be done. Every 30 minutes someone in the United States dies in an alcohol-related motor vehicle crash. Every two minutes someone is injured in a crash. Alcohol is involved in 39 percent of fatal crashes, which kill more than 16,000 Americans each year.

Safe Communities programs, with their emphasis on involving a wide variety of partners, are well-positioned to take advantage of the momentum generated by the recently published *Presidential Initiative for Making .08 BAC the National Legal Limit: Recommendations from the Secretary of Transportation*. This document outlines a four-point plan:

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New Era photo by Richard Hertzler

Lancaster Cops In Shops in action

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The Lancaster (Pennsylvania) County Safe Communities Project demonstrates how the Safe Communities model can effectively address the issue of impaired driving. Lancaster County is working with the Cops In Shops program, in which plainclothes police officers trained to identify fraudulent identification work shifts in liquor stores, cite minors attempting to buy alcohol using fake IDs, and arrest adults buying alcohol for younger people. Lancaster County Safe Communities' efforts to publicize Cops In Shops has resulted in a great deal of attention from the local press—attention that should deter young people from attempting to purchase alcohol using fraudulent identification.

Safe Communities Coordinator Felicity DeBacco reports, "The retailers realize that underage individuals will try to obtain alcohol, and the end result could be a DUI [driving under the influence]. They are 'on board' with the idea that stopping the sale is the first step to combating under

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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.

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Building Safe Communities is available on the World Wide Web at www.edc.org/HHD/csn/bsc/.

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PREVENTING IMPAIRED DRIVING (continued from page 1)

- Enact state and tribal .08 BAC (blood alcohol content) per se laws that make it illegal to drive with a BAC of .08 or above
- Develop effective public education programs on impaired driving
- Embrace active, high-visibility enforcement of impaired driving laws
- Build public-private partnerships at the Federal, state, and local levels to address impaired driving

Safe Communities programs, which focus on using data to define injury problems, stress the need to target groups that account for a large proportion of the deaths and injuries associated with impaired driving. These groups include:

- Drivers between the ages of 21 and 34, who account for more than half of all alcohol-involved fatal crashes
- Repeat offenders, many of whom are alcohol-dependent, and who are involved in more than 50 percent of alcohol-related crashes on weekends and at night, even though they represent only 1 percent of the drivers operating vehicles during those periods
- Underage drinkers, whose lack of experience with both drinking and driving form a deadly combination

The Impaired Driving Program of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) is undertaking several initiatives that support the goal of reducing alcohol-related traffic fatalities to no more than 11,000 per year by the year 2005. This goal was established at the October 1997 Partners in Progress: Joining Together Against Impaired Driving conference. The strategies for achieving this goal, as outlined in *Partners in Progress: An Impaired Driving Guide for Action*, include supporting public

education; encouraging individual responsibility; involving the health care and business communities, as well as employers; promoting effective legislation; gaining the support of those in law enforcement and the courts; and applying technological solutions to the problem of impaired driving.

NHTSA is also supporting a national Partners in Progress public relations campaign, which includes two law enforcement mobilization periods (in July and December), and will continue to support the Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) Impaired Driving Regional Workshops and Campaign Safe and Sober Workshops, both of which provide technical assistance to states in support of legislative initiatives on .08 BAC, graduated licensing, repeat offender, and open-container laws.

The prevention of impaired driving is an issue that enjoys widespread support in many communities. It is a perfect “entry-level” activity for new Safe Communities programs, as well as a way for established programs to involve new partners. This issue of *Building Safe Communities* contains several reports on Safe Communities programs that are making headway in this important struggle, and descriptions of resources to help programs become more effective in their campaigns against impaired driving.

For more information on the resources mentioned in this article, see page 5.

IMPAIRED DRIVING DEFINITIONS

Blood alcohol content (BAC) reveals how much alcohol a person has consumed by measuring the proportion of alcohol contained in the bloodstream. In most states, a person is legally intoxicated with a BAC of .10 (that is, the blood has an alcohol content of one-tenth of one percent or above). Research has determined that the risk of being in a crash rises rapidly after a driver reaches .08 BAC (a significantly lower level of intoxication than .10 BAC).

BAC per se laws make it an offense to drive with a BAC at or above the legal level, whether or not the driver shows visible signs of intoxication.

Zero tolerance laws prohibit persons under 21 from driving with any measurable amount of alcohol in their blood.

Open-container laws make it an offense to have an open alcohol container in a motor vehicle (even if the driver is not drinking) or, in some cases, anywhere in public.

Graduated licensing is a process by which young, or new, drivers are introduced to full driving privileges by stages. Each level of licensing includes restrictions and qualifications (such as requiring a licensed adult driver in the car at all times, or remaining free of crashes or convictions for one year) before moving on to the next, less prohibitive, level. Full licensing is usually the third level of such a system.

INVOLVING YOUTH IN SAFE COMMUNITIES

The role that young people play in the issue of impaired driving is not limited to being part of the problem; they can also be part of the solution. In September, NHTSA, MADD, and the Coalition to Stop Teen Alcohol & Drugged Driving kicked off a campaign in the Dallas-Fort Worth area to publicize Texas's Zero Tolerance law. Activities included a "Chalk It Up" program in which students illustrated, with chalk drawings on sidewalks near schools, the consequences of impaired driving. In addition, members of MADD's Youth In Action (YIA) briefed area police chiefs on the importance of enforcing the Zero Tolerance law. Bobby Heard, MADD's national director of youth programs, believes that many young people need to be educated about impaired driving and Zero Tolerance. Heard says, "Through the YIA program and campaigns such as 'Chalk It Up,' we are encouraging teens to get involved in saving the lives of other teens." The effort in Dallas-Fort Worth, and particularly the involvement of MADD's YIA team, will serve as a model for a National Zero Tolerance Awareness and Educational Initiative.



Safe Communities programs are also finding youth to be valuable partners in the struggle against impaired driving. Becky Byzewski, coordinator of the Southwest Coalition of Safe Communities in North Dakota, thinks that "it is important to have young people involved in efforts to reduce underage drinking. They see the problem in a different light than do adults. A lot of us have forgotten what being a teenager is like. We forget about the peer pressure to drink. And things



A 17-year-old impaired driver and his 16-year-old passenger were killed in this car while attempting to outrun a train to a railroad crossing.

have changed since we went to high school. If we don't listen to our young people, we are not going to be able to effectively address the problem of underage drinking." The Southwest Coalition is working with students at Dickinson State University and local high schools on impaired driving and Zero Tolerance. Byzewski reports that their peer education program has been especially well-received. In this program, an older student discusses impaired driving with a younger student. As a final activity, friendship bracelets are exchanged as an ongoing reminder of the lessons learned.

Byzewski also believes that parents and youth need to be educated on the financial consequences of Zero Tolerance. The cost of a young person's automobile insurance triples after his or her first impaired driving offense—and can be terminated after the second. The Southwest Coalition has estimated the cost of a first impaired driving offense by a



Chalk It Up's "Best Slogan Award" winner

young person (in a situation in which there is no collision and no one has been injured) to be \$3,000 in court costs, fines, and increased insurance. The cost of a second offense rises to \$6,000. The cost of a third offense is \$15,000. After a crash in which someone is killed or injured, the resulting lawsuits and medical expenses can endanger a family's financial assets.

Impaired driving by young people has decreased in North Dakota over the last year. Byzewski attributes this to the Zero Tolerance law and its surrounding publicity. She says, "All it takes is a couple of kids losing their licenses, and word starts to get around. This is a powerful deterrent in a rural area with no public transportation system." Young people can also help prevent impaired driving by

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INVOLVING YOUTH

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participating in a teen court program. Teen courts are diversionary programs, generally operated by nonjudicial bodies such as school systems. They were originally established to reduce the burden on regular courts, allowing the courts to focus on more serious offenses. Although nonjudicial, teen courts are very formal and often hold their sessions in actual courtrooms. In teen courts, adolescents act as attorneys, bailiffs, jurors, and, occasionally, judges. Most teen courts handle first-time misdemeanor offenses. While teen courts usually do not try impaired driving cases, they do hear other alcohol-related offenses, such as violations of underage drinking and open-container laws. Effective enforcement of these laws can deter future alcohol-related offenses, including impaired driving.

“Teen Court is not just a sentencing hearing,” says Russell Landry of the Leon County (Florida) Teen Court Program, “but a program where teens, through positive peer pressure, establish a culture of lawful behavior and citizenship.” Landry attributes the low recidivism rate among teens in Leon County to the Teen Court and the influence teens have with their peers. “Kids respect the decisions other kids make—and they *listen*.” And teen courts go beyond responding to criminal offenses; they also address the decision-making processes that lead to that behavior. Landry has seen young “lawyers” verbally review a defendant’s file and ask such questions as, “I see you want to go to college and be an engineer. Is possession of alcohol something that will help you achieve that goal?” Landry notes that he has “seen defendants visibly blanch when asked a question like that by their peers. They really take notice.”

Teen courts exist in more than 340 American communities. To learn more about the Teen Court in Leon County, visit their website at <www.nettally.com/teencourt/index.html>. To find out more about how your Safe Communities program can become involved in a teen court, see page 5.

LANCASTER COUNTY

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age drinking and DUI among this age group. Those with whom I have spoken are also open to the idea of distributing anti-DUI literature in their businesses.”

DeBacco first became aware of the problem of impaired driving in her former position as a probation officer with Lancaster County’s Impaired Driver Program. She was one of ten DUI probation officers, each of whom had an average caseload of 260 offenders. The Lancaster County Safe Communities program also works closely with the DUI Task Force of Lancaster County, handling paperwork and other tasks at sobriety checkpoints organized by the Task Force. Both groups are sponsoring activities in conjunction with National Drugged and Drunk Driving Prevention (3D) Month, including a kick-off press conference, educational programs, and a DUI Awareness Conference (sponsored by Lancaster General Hospital and the DUI Council of Lancaster County), at which Lancaster County Safe Communities will provide a seminar on spotting fraudulent identification.



Information on the Cops In Shops program, including manuals, posters, and public education materials, is available from The Century Council, 550 South Hope Street, Suite 1950, Los Angeles, CA 90071-2604. Telephone: (213) 624-9898; fax: (213) 624-9012.

NHTSA maintains a database of Safe Communities programs. If you have not registered your program with NHTSA, please contact:

Safe Communities Service Center
NHTSA Region VI—Room 8A38
819 Taylor Street
Fort Worth, TX 76102
Telephone: (817) 978-3653
Fax: (817) 978-8339
E-mail: Safe.Communities@nhtsa.dot.gov

SAFE COMMUNITIES



PROGRAMS AS OF NOVEMBER 1998

RESOURCES FOR YOUTH PROGRAMS

The Teen Court Project offers training and technical assistance. Contact Tracy Godwin, Teen Courts Project Manager, American Probation and Parole Association, c/o the Council of State Governments, P.O. Box 11910, Lexington, KY 40578-1910. Fax: (606) 244-8001. Their publication, *Peer Justice and Youth Empowerment: An Implementation Guide for Teen Court Programs*, is available from NHTSA, at the address below.

Groups that can provide ideas on involving youth in Safe Communities programs include:

- The BACCHUS and GAMMA Peer Education Network, an association of college peer education programs. Contact information for affiliates can be found on the Web at www.bacchusgamma.org/index.html or obtained by telephone at (303) 871-0901.
- Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), 511 E. John Carpenter Freeway, Irving, TX 75602. WWW: www.madd.org/.
- Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), P.O. Box 800, Marlborough, MA 01752. Telephone: (508) 481-3568; WWW: www.saddonline.com/.

RESOURCES FOR PREVENTING IMPAIRED DRIVING

A description of NHTSA's Impaired Driving Program can be found on the NHTSA website at www.nhtsa.dot.gov. For information on the Impaired Driving Workshops, contact MADD (see above). For information on Campaign Safe and Sober Workshops, contact your NHTSA Regional Office.

Copies of the *Presidential Initiative for Making .08 BAC the National Legal Limit: Recommendations from the Secretary of Transportation; Partners in Progress: An Impaired Driving Guide for Action; .08 Limit Saves Lives: Why Every State Needs a .08 BAC Law*; the *1998 National Drunk and Drugged Driving (3D) Prevention Month Program Planner* (which includes resources and ideas for year-round activities); and other publications are available on the NHTSA website at www.nhtsa.dot.gov/ or from the NHTSA Clearinghouse at U.S. DOT/NHTSA, Media and Marketing Division, NTS-21, 400 Seventh Street, SW, Washington, DC 20590, Attn: TSP Resource Center Orders. Fax: (202) 493-2062.

NHTSA resources on working with law enforcement agencies, liquor retailers, and the hospitality industry include *Youth DWI and Underage Enforcement Manual*, *Retail-Oriented Best Practices for Underage Drinking Prevention*, and *Strategies for Success: Combating Juvenile DUI* (available March 1999). Also useful is *Promising Approaches in the Prevention of Underage Drinking*, available from the National Association of Governors' Highway Safety Representatives, 750 First Street, NE, Suite 720, Washington, DC 20002-4241. Telephone: (202) 789-0942; WWW: www.naghsr.org.

Join Together, a national resource for communities working to reduce substance abuse, can be reached at 441 Stuart Street, Boston, MA 02116. Telephone: (617) 437-1500; WWW: www.jointogether.org/.

The Hardcore Drunk Driver, a research summary, is available from The Century Council, 1201 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20004. Telephone: (202) 661-4701. Other research summaries, bibliographies, and state-specific data on this issue can be found on the Web at www.dwi.org.

Two other sources of materials, research, and technical assistance are the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) and the National Commission Against Drunk Driving (NCADD). Contact: NCADI, P.O. Box 2345, Rockville, MD 20847-2345. Telephone: (301) 468-6433; e-mail: info@health.org; WWW: www.health.org/. NCADD: 1900 L Street, NW, Suite 705, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: (202) 452-6004; WWW: www.ncadd.com/.

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