

WISCONSIN TRAFFIC SAFETY REPORTER

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2009



Fed up with drunken driving

Major Dan
Lonsdorf
Director, Bureau
of Transportation
Safety

Wisconsin ended 2008 with the lowest number of traffic fatalities in more than 60 years. However, this encouraging reduction is little consolation to the families and friends of the nearly 600 men, women and children who died in crashes last year.

We know hundreds of these deaths were preventable—especially those caused by drunken driving. In 2008, alcohol-related crashes statewide killed 234 people and injured more than 4,300. During the past five years, our state has averaged more than 300 alcohol-related fatalities and 5,500 injuries annually.

No countermeasure by itself will end drunken driving. But by employing innovative strategies, we can keep more drunken drivers off our roads and prevent many tragedies.

There is growing momentum and widespread public support for attacking our drunken driving problem. I am optimistic that by this time next year I can report great strides in reducing drunken driving throughout the state.

Mark your calendar!

August 19-20

35th annual Governor's
Conference on Highway Safety

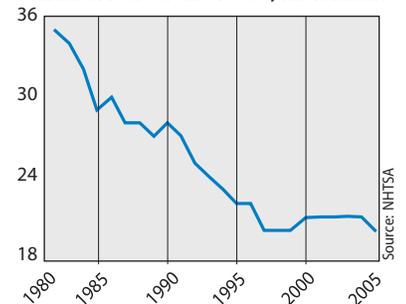
Appleton — See page 8

An ounce of prevention

Drunken driving kills about 13,000 people in the United States each year. In Wisconsin, 737 people were killed in crashes during 2007 and 46% of these fatalities were alcohol-related. For 15 years (see graph) dramatic progress was made reducing this tragic toll but in recent years progress has stalled.

How can we marshal our resources and do better at saving lives? One way is to do better at deterring people from driving drunk in the first place. Here are the stories of diverse Wisconsin communities and their prevention programs.

Percentage of drivers in fatal crashes with BAC at or above .08, nationwide



Teens create safe driving messages

Teenagers will listen to some people. Sometimes it's a rock star or famous athlete. Sometimes it's even their own parents and teachers. But one group they definitely listen to is other teens, especially their friends and classmates.

This is true for all sorts of topics, so couldn't it also be true for safe driving? Children's Health Education Center in Milwaukee has found that teens statewide are eager to create and share life-saving messages.

continued on page 5

Reader survey

Help us improve the TSR

This is your chance to help improve the *Wisconsin Traffic Safety Reporter*. We would like to hear from you if you have suggestions for how this newsletter could be more interesting and useful for you.

We're using a survey service called SurveyMonkey.com. It's easy and free. No paperwork or postage. On the Internet, go to tinyurl.com/tsrsurvey and fill out the short survey.

Thanks for your help!



During 2007, two Germantown High School students were killed in alcohol-related crashes. Students produced a video dramatizing the tragedy of teen drinking and driving. Still impaired after a drinking party the night before, a teen gets behind the wheel and causes a fatal crash. Vivid scenes include a mock crash, emergency room, courtroom and jail cell.

The art of deterrence

DeForest high-visibility OWI patrols

In the ongoing struggle against drunken driving, the Village of DeForest Police Department is trying something new.

Last fall they launched Operation NightCAP (Nighttime Concentrated Alcohol Enforcement Program). Their main goal is deterrence. They want to convince drivers that if they drive drunk there's a good chance they'll be arrested. During a NightCAP saturation patrol, about a dozen officers focus on a location where drunken driving has been a problem, and they use a high-visibility, in-your-face approach. With bright, LED "OWI Task Force" signs, flares, and wearing reflective vests, officers watch every passing car and if they spot any violation—speeding, taillight out, etc.—they pull drivers over and check for sobriety.



High visibility OWI enforcement in DeForest

Get to know ... Vicki Schwabe

Operations Program Associate
DOT Bureau of Transportation Safety



A key challenge for any organization is to operate efficiently. One of the key people in achieving efficiency is the office manager, whose work helps colleagues get their jobs done. Vicki has been handling this job smoothly at BOTS since 1996 and many of this newsletter's readers already know her and have benefited from her cheerful assistance.

An important part of her work is assisting Major Dan Lonsdorf, BOTS director. Her duties vary widely and include administrative work, purchasing, and organizing meetings.

One major recurring project is making arrangements for the annual Governor's Conference on Highway Safety. As soon as one conference is done, planning begins for the next. Good venues with suitable facilities have to be found. (For this summer's conference, see page 8.) She works closely with Major Lonsdorf and the BOTS state and regional program managers to identify workshop and session topics. "A fun part for me," she says, "is getting to meet and work one-on-one with the presenters and keynote speakers." For example, in 2006 one of the keynote speakers was Miss America, Jennifer Berry, whose goal was to raise public awareness about drunken driving and underage drinking. Though the guidelines for Jennifer's travel arrangements were strict and detailed, Vicki was pleased to find her to be pleasant and down-to-earth. One of her main requests was for . . . cheese curds.

With its numerous deadlines, some pressure comes with the job, but there are payoffs too. Vicki counts an important one as being able to work in a friendly and interesting environment with colleagues who are devoted to improving traffic safety.

Contact Vicki at (608) 266-0402 or
vicki.schwabe@dot.state.wi.us.

Right away, officers noticed the deterrent effect. After the first patrol, for example, two nearby bars had many more cars than usual left in their parking lots the next day. Their owners had decided to take a safer ride home.

Lt. Dan Furseth learned about this approach because of the success of a pilot program in Anoka County, Minnesota. A northern suburb of the Twin Cities, this county was chosen because it had one of the state's highest alcohol-related crash rates, and also because all the law enforcement agencies in the county have an exceptional record of working well together. The Anoka County DWI Task Force did extensive planning and preparation, and then launched high-visibility enforcement in May 2007.

NHTSA has published a report (DOT HS 811 039), which includes an evaluation of the Anoka pilot program. Five months into the program, a telephone survey found that 27% of drivers statewide thought it was very likely they would be stopped if they drove drunk, while 42% of Anoka residents thought so. According to the report, "residents saw local media with local messages—our officers are making impaired driving arrests on our roads." While they may not have seen an enforcement zone themselves, they may have heard about one from friends, neighbors or co-workers. Crash data document the strategy's success. From May through September 2007, the number of crashes with a serious injury or fatality in Anoka dropped to 50, or 37% below the 2004-06 average of 79. Alcohol-related serious injury or fatality crashes dropped to 11, or 35% below the three-year average of 17. There were only two alcohol-related fatalities in 2007 compared to the three-year average of four.

Based on Anoka County's success, the Minnesota Department of Public Safety has now extended this approach to five more counties.



The *Wisconsin Traffic Safety Reporter* is published by the Bureau of Transportation Safety, Wisconsin Department of Transportation. Its purpose is to promote transportation safety, recognize worthwhile programs, and to educate and share ideas with safety professionals.

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Wisconsin and 11 other states don't allow sobriety checkpoints, in which officers typically stop vehicles in a specific sequence (e.g., every fifth one). DeForest's saturation patrols aren't checkpoints because officers only stop drivers when they see violations. In November, Police Chief Robert Henze met with tavern owners to discuss NightCAP because some have expressed concern about the campaign. He reported a productive meeting, "Our missions are the same: *everyone gets a safe ride home.*"

Contact Lt. Furseth at fursethd@vi.deforest.wi.us or Tom Knoop, DOT-BOTS, at (608)267-3297 or Thomas.Knoop@dot.wi.gov

West Allis



18" x 24" plastic yard sign in West Allis

DeForest is trying a new way to deter drunk driving (see story page 2), and, since April, West Allis is trying a new way to prevent underage drinking parties.

The West Allis Police Department is using both old and new ways to monitor when such parties are planned. Officers know about the big events during the school year, such as football games and prom, that are prime nights for underage drinking. They are also in touch with school resource officers and with establishments that sell alcohol. Students can receive cash rewards for reporting drinking parties to Crime Stoppers. But now officers are also monitoring social networking websites such as *Facebook* and *MySpace* to find out where parties are planned.

When one is found, officers call the parents to try to prevent the gathering. With the parents' permission, they post this sign in the front yard. Chief Mike Jungbluth says it lets party-goers know that parents, school district and police all know about the party. The sign also alerts neighbors.

If a homeowner is uncooperative, the sign is posted on city property in front of the house. Concerned parents who won't be home can drop off their house keys with the police so a party won't occur. This is necessary because underage drinking isn't an emergency and therefore occupants can deny officers entry to a home.

Resource Center on Impaired Driving

Combining the efforts of WisDOT and the UW Law School, and with funding support from BOTS, the Resource Center on Impaired Driving (RCID) provides a wide range of alcohol-related data and legal information on impaired driving issues to judges, prosecutors, defense attorneys, law enforcement agencies, legislators and citizens.

In March more than 180 officers and prosecutors attended RCID's Vehicular Homicide Conference in Brookfield. Coordinated by RCID's Traffic Safety Resource Prosecutor, Tara Schipper, with assistance from the State Patrol's Technical Reconstruction Unit, topics included: crash investigation and reconstruction techniques, Event Data Recorders, trial preparation and special issues in OWI crash cases.



RCID will offer OWI Trial Advocacy Training for prosecutors in September.

Go to www.law.wisc.edu/rcid/

The yard signs especially have gotten media attention. Following local media coverage, Chief Jungbluth was interviewed on the national morning news program *Fox and Friends* on April 6. He focused on a positive message and expressed confidence that "our community will help our young kids exercise some better personal responsibility."

The department received DOT-BOTS funding support for PARTY Patrol. For more about communities in Wisconsin that are trying new ways to deter underage drinking parties, see *Parents Who Host Lose the Most* on page 7.



West Allis Police Chief Mike Jungbluth explains PARTY Patrol on *Fox and Friends*. Trying something new can get media attention, which raises community awareness and helps with deterrence.

Contact Captain Charles Unger at cunger@ci.west-allis.wi.us or Tom Knoop, DOT-BOTS (608) 267-3297 or Thomas.Knoop@dot.wi.gov.



New DRE/SFST State Coordinator

In February the DOT Bureau of Transportation Safety contracted with Sgt. Nate Thompson, De Pere Police Department, to become the new DRE (Drug Recognition Expert) / SFST (Standardized Field Sobriety Test) State Coordinator.

Initially his main focus will be making sure that DRE/SFST-trained officers remain certified. He also will be getting the DRE and SFST Oversight committees back together.

A key part of his job will be working with community partners such as the Resource Center on Impaired Driving at the UW Law School. All program responsibilities for the DRE/SFST statewide programs will remain with Blinda Beason, State Program Manager.

Sgt. Thompson and regional coordinators will be attending the IACP Training Conference on Drugs, Alcohol and Impaired Driving in Little Rock, August 8-10. This conference helps keep DREs and other health and safety professionals up-to-date on drug trends, legal issues and innovative technology. For more about DREs and the coordinators' responsibilities, visit www.decp.org.

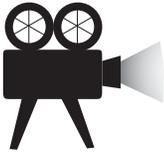
Contact Sgt. Thompson at sgtnate@sbcglobal.net or (920)-216-3456.



Neenah High School movie Harsh reality

Neenah High School students have teamed up with adults from their school and community to create a sobering message about how easy it can be to make a fatal mistake.

Eight students worked with teachers and a multi-media producer for Lakeshore Technical College to produce a 48-minute movie, *The Edge of Reality*. The trailer is at <http://web.mac.com/vbayer1/Reality/Welcome.html> and the *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* is streaming the entire video on their *Wasted in Wisconsin* website.



Scenes from Neenah High School's movie: a parent-tolerated drinking party, including beer pong, leads to death, disabling injury and prison.

Starring the students, the movie dramatizes a drinking party that leads to a crash, leaving two dead, another youth permanently disabled and the driver in prison. The party had been allowed by a parent who cautioned the teens to “stay here and don’t go overboard” and “keep it at an adult level.” (See article on page 7.)

The student filmmakers also worked closely with Ruth Melzer, an employee of the Neenah Joint School District. In July 2007, Ruth and her husband were bicycling when they were struck by a speeding, intoxicated driver. Ruth was seriously injured, and her husband was killed. She says, “The kids and I really connected, and I think it’s because they felt what we went through.”

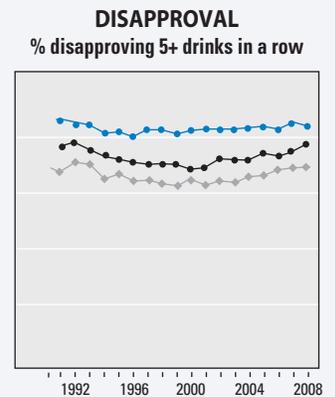
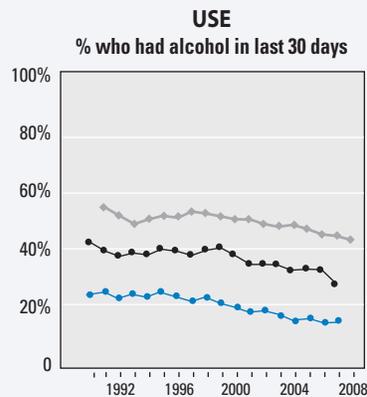
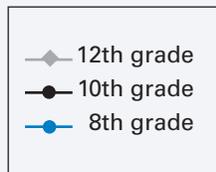
In October before homecoming, the movie debuted for an audience of 2,100 at the high school and more than 600 at community presentations. Within a month, 500 copies of the DVD were sold, and now, with funding from the J.J. Keller Foundation, school staff are making presentations around the state. Time Warner’s Northeast Wisconsin Network 1111 has been playing the movie and some judges are requiring young offenders to watch it.

Some movies make little impression on us, but this one grabs your attention. As teacher and co-producer Vicki Bayer says, “Many students have a superman complex that nothing’s going to happen to them.” Their goal was to break through this and convey how harsh reality can be.



Trends in underage drinking

Data from the 34th annual national survey in the *Monitoring the Future* series conducted by the University of Michigan’s Institute for Social Research. Results were presented at the White House in December.



Teens' safe driving messages *continued from page 1*

The Center, a member of Children's Hospital and Health System, has many safety programs. It distributes car seats and bike helmets and educates families on their correct use. It trains and recertifies child passenger safety technicians and promotes better traffic safety laws. Car crashes are the leading cause of death for teens, so the Center has launched its *Cruise Control* program devoted to teen driving safety.

Last year the Center partnered with DOT, DPI and Ford Motor Company to sponsor an ad campaign contest. In January 2008, high schools statewide were invited to enter a competition to raise teen safe driving awareness. Student teams (3-15 members with an adult advisor) were challenged to develop a multimedia ad campaign piece such as a digital video, pod cast or website design. The goal was to address behavior that contributes to crashes and to include skills presented in Ford's *Driving Skills for Life* (www.drivingskillsforlife.com). Contest entries were judged according to criteria such as creativity and marketability.

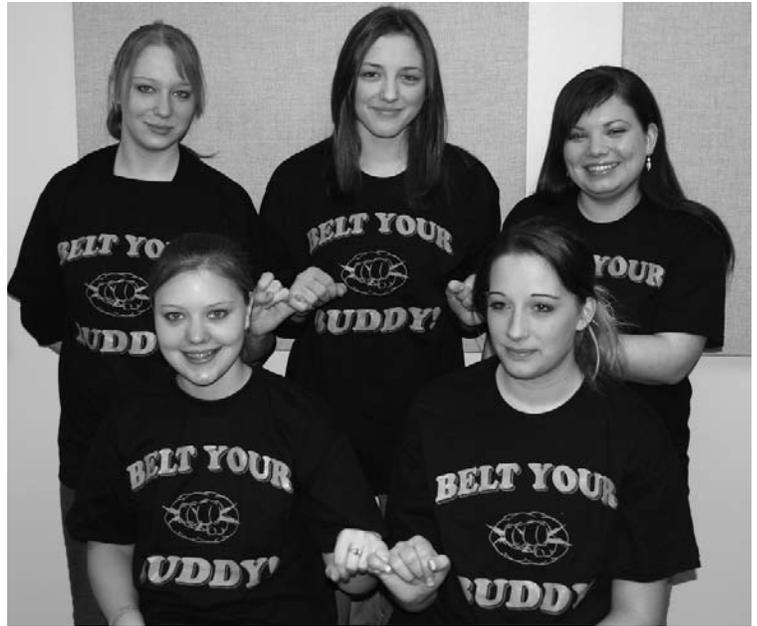
- 1st Seymour High School
- 2nd Germantown High School
- 3rd DC Everest High School

These three all produced videos, available on DVD and at www.bluekids.org/CruiseControl.

This year seven high schools will participate in the Center's Cruise Control program, receiving \$500 mini-grants to develop a safe driving program for their school and community. They are: Baldwin-Woodville HS, East Troy HS, Eisenhower HS in New Berlin, Iola-Scandinavia HS, Pecatonica HS, Rice Lake HS and Stoughton HS. Students began work in January on projects including safety belt checks, mock crashes and PSA's. Project updates appear on the Cruise Control website.

Contact Deena Liska at (414) 390-2182 or DLiska@chw.org. Also see her profile on page 6.

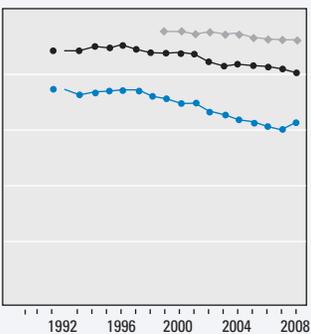
*Germantown High School has also held the **Every 15 Minutes** two-day driving safety program. Every 15 minutes—the frequency of traffic fatalities nationwide—the grim reaper takes a student out of class, whose face is whitened and who then joins the harvest of lost lives.*



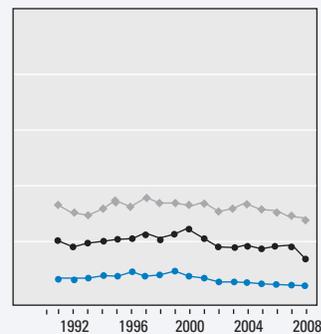
Seymour High School has a strong driver safety program, led for years by Doc Fairbanks, and the school's auto club has long partnered with the police department to raise safety belt awareness. The school's winning entry is a video, **The Click for Life**, available on DVD and the web. Noting that only 47% of the school's students wear safety belts, it focuses on students whose lives were saved because they buckled up, along with input by a local police officer and an EMT. The video then highlights things schools and communities can do to encourage belt use. With contest prize money, 200 student-designed Belt Your Buddy T-shirts were purchased and are now given out as prizes at safety belt checks.



AVAILABILITY
"fairly" or "very easy" to get alcohol



USE UNTIL DRUNK
% reporting being drunk in last 30 days



Driver safety video game—a runner-up entry created by students at Bay Port High School in Green Bay.

Highway Safety Partners

This section profiles people who are helping improve traffic safety in Wisconsin.



Carolyn Held

Motorcycle Safety Instructor

Contact
Carolyn at
heldc@
sbcglobal.net.



"It's fun work but it's challenging," Carolyn says of teaching safe motorcycling. She excels at it and recently received the Motorcycle Safety Foundation (MSF) award as Outstanding Rider Coach in Wisconsin. In 2007, she also received the Motorcycle Safety Instructor Award from DOT's Wisconsin Motorcycle Safety Program (WMSP).

Carolyn's love of motorcycling began in high school, and she went on to work at Harley-Davidson dealerships and the corporate office. Now, she is an instructor at Milwaukee Area Technical College and also at two Harley-Davidson dealerships.

She teaches the 16-hour Basic Motorcycle Rider Course, developed by MSF for beginners. Part of the course is in the classroom and the rest is on an off-street riding range. Motorcycles and helmets are provided. She also teaches the Advanced Rider Course, a minimum of eight hours aimed at honing skills, with riders bringing their own motorcycles. Altogether she has taught more than 800 students so far. "It's a great mix of people, from many different backgrounds and a wide range of ages," Carolyn says. "By the end of the course, many of them develop a real connection."

These courses, offered statewide by technical colleges and other third parties, are sponsored by WMSP within the Bureau of Transportation Safety. The WMSP manager, Greg Patzer, visits training sites each year to assess instruction and provide updates on the curriculum.

Ridership is soaring nationwide and so are fatal crashes. In 1997, there were 2,110 fatalities and by 2006 this had more than doubled to 4,810. Many aging baby boomers are getting back into motorcycling, often with enthusiasm but with rusty skills. Carolyn says, "Some people think rider ed is for sissies, but many are surprised by how much they learn." One fellow in his 60s was prodded by his wife to take the course and soon he was glad he had. Riding on a city street, a car cut him off and he swerved using a technique he had just learned. He called Carolyn back, saying, "Your course saved my life. I'm going to be telling my friends to take it too."



Deena Liska

Motor Vehicle Safety Educator
Children's Health Education
Center at Children's Hospital
and Health System, Milwaukee

When Deena joined Children's Hospital and Health System in 2006, she brought more than 20 years of experience in safety education and prevention, having worked for fire and ambulance services in the nonprofit, government and private sectors. At the City of Brookfield Fire Department she had coordinated a safety education program that reached more than

1,600 children each year, along with organizing community safety events. She began her career as a firefighter/EMT and retired as a captain from the New Berlin Fire Department after 15 years of service.

Now she coordinates the Children's Health Education Center's *Cruise Control* teen driving safety program (www.bluekids.org/CruiseControl). With funding from the Bureau of Transportation Safety and Ford Motor Company, the program partners with high schools statewide to develop teen-led projects aimed at reducing teen driving fatalities. (See an example on page 1.)

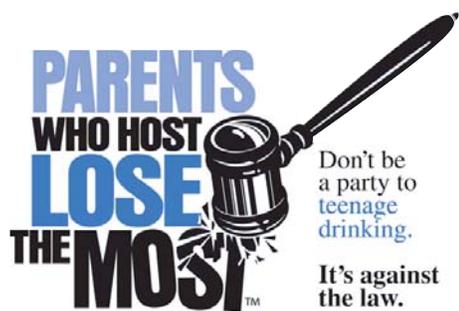
Deena has also been involved in improving child passenger safety in the urban community. She manages the Booster and Car Seat Clinic at the main hospital campus, helping families install and use their children's car seats correctly. She has been a Child Passenger Safety Technician for seven years and last year became an instructor. She received a bachelor of arts in communication and is pursuing a master of education, both at Alverno College.

Her work brings many rewards, including lives saved and injuries prevented. She recalls a family who came in to learn how to properly use their child safety seats, and not much later were in a highway-speed crash in which their vehicle rolled and ended up on its roof. The father was injured but rescuers found the children suspended in their car seats with only minor scrapes.

Reflecting on her work, she says, "There are so many exciting and successful safety programs going on statewide. One of our goals is to call attention to them as we work with people involved in injury prevention, education and law enforcement." She plans to keep this newsletter posted about progress with the Center's and other organization's programs around the state.

Contact Deena at (414) 390-2182 or DLiska@chw.org.





Some parents view underage drinking as a nearly inevitable rite of passage, especially at prom and graduation parties. Some feel that allowing teen drinking parties in their homes at least gives them a measure of control.

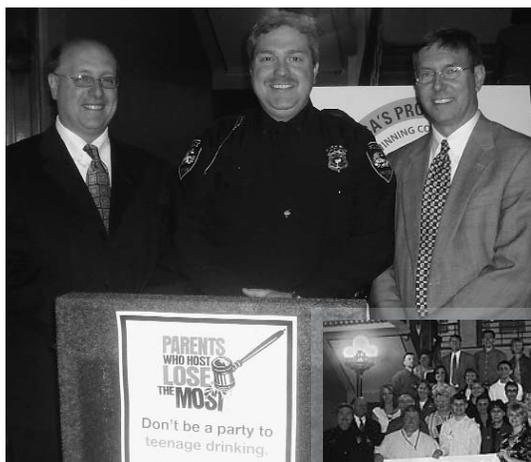
Now a broad coalition of state agencies and organizations along with numerous community groups is launching the *Parents Who Host Lose the Most* campaign in Wisconsin. It aims to educate parents about the health, safety and legal risks of providing alcohol to youth. It combines a proven public information and media advocacy campaign with compliance checks and party patrols. This kind of statewide approach was pioneered in Ohio in 2000, and follow-up surveys have found strong positive results.

Partners include the Alliance for Wisconsin Youth, Wisconsin DOT, DPI, DHS and DCF, and the Wisconsin Clearinghouse for Prevention Resources.

Community coalitions, organizations and local law enforcement can qualify for:

- Free campaign materials, training and support
- Police overtime and training costs

In January at CESA (Cooperative Educational Service Agency) offices statewide, informational sessions provided an overview and explained the application procedure. Funding to law enforcement comes from the ongoing CARD (Comprehensive Alcohol ReDuction) program overseen by WisDOT. Communities doing information campaigns without heightened enforcement aren't eligible for free materials or training.



Wood County is an example of how effective community partnerships can be. Leading their effort are the Marshfield Area Coalition for Youth (MACY), the Inner Wisconsin Coalition for Youth (IWCFY) based in Wisconsin Rapids, Marshfield Clinic's Center for Community Outreach, and the sheriff's department.

This spring they hosted two Family & Community Town Suppers focused on *Parents Who Host*. IWCFY's DaNita Carlson says their goal is "to blanket the county—including in schools and newspapers, on squad cars, and with yard signs—with the consistent message that the community doesn't tolerate underage drinking." Starting this fall, a tip line to Crime Stoppers will also accept text messages.

Sheriff Tom Reichert, noting that Wisconsin consistently ranks high for teenage drinking, says we need to "change our culture regarding underage alcohol use." Marshfield Clinic's Dorothy Chaney says, "Beyond informing adults of the legal consequences of hosting an underage drinking party, we want to promote a community dialogue that educates parents on the many reasons teens should not drink alcohol."

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15-20-year-olds nationwide. Young drivers are less than 7% of the total, but they are responsible for 20% of crash fatalities. They are more often involved in alcohol-related crashes than any other group, and they are much less likely to wear safety belts after drinking.

Drinking can also lead to violence, including sexual assault, and diminished prospects in life. Research has shown that early alcohol use can hinder brain development in long-lasting ways (Alcohol and Development in Youth, *Alcohol Research & Health*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 2004/05). Parents in Wisconsin who host an underage drinking party can end up serving nine months in jail and paying fines as high as \$10,000.

Neenah High School students have produced a movie, on DVD and the web, that dramatizes the tragic results of a parent-tolerated teen drinking party (page 4).

Julia Sherman from the Wisconsin Clearinghouse says, "It's wonderful to have all these agencies and organizations working together." In April she reported that the campaign had "taken off like a rocket" with more than 50 health and prevention coalitions participating. She notes that DOT has helped make the campaign evidence-based, and she commends Blinda Beason of the Bureau of Transportation Safety for years of effort bringing together the partnership.

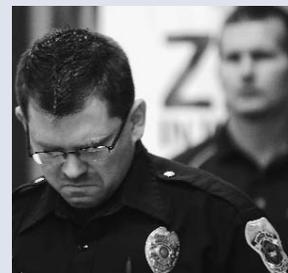
The launch of one of many *Parents Who Host* campaigns statewide. Press conference in May 2008 at the Brown County Court House: (l-r) Manitowoc County District Attorney Mark Rohrer, Two Rivers Police Chief Joe Collins and Brown County District Attorney John Zakowski.

Contact Julia at jsherman2@wisc.edu and Blinda at blinda.beason@dot.state.wi.us.

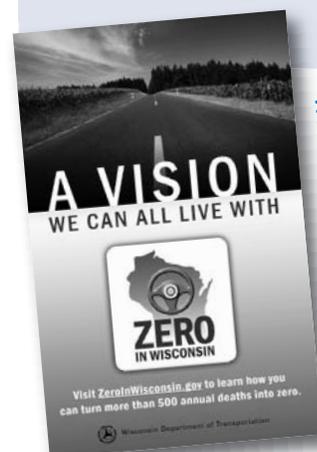


Grassroots message near Wisconsin Rapids in Wood County

Green Bay police officer Mike Knetzger has arrested more than 500 drunken drivers during his 15-year career. In June, Brown County Sheriff's deputies came to his home with news that his step-daughter and her friend had been killed by a vehicle that ran a red light. The other driver has been charged with two counts of homicide by intoxicated use of a motor vehicle.



Knetzger spoke at the January 5 kick-off of the *Zero in Wisconsin* statewide public awareness campaign, launched by WisDOT and its traffic safety partners. Visit the campaign website for first-hand crash survivors' stories, crash facts and media materials. Knetzger says, "Attitudes need to change. It's an entire culture that needs to change regarding drunken driving. We need to be the voice for those who have been killed by drunken drivers, and advocate for change in Wisconsin."



www.ZeroInWisconsin.gov



August 18

Preceding the Governor's Conference

Board meetings and trainings

August 19-20

35th annual Governor's Conference on Highway Safety

Radisson Paper Valley Hotel, Appleton

Keynote speaker:
Bill Cordes

www.billcordes.com

Contact Vicki Schwabe,
WisDOT BOTS
(608) 266-0402 or
vicki.schwabe@dot.state.wi.us

August 21-23

2009 National Motorcycle Safety Conference

hosted by WisDOT
Motorcycle Safety Program
Madison Concourse Hotel

Contact Greg Patzer
DOT-BOTS, (608) 266-7855
Gregory.Patzer@dot.wi.gov
www.smsa.org

Raising alcohol abuse AWAREness

"Wisconsin is an island of excessive alcohol consumption," says Robert Golden, M.D., dean of the UW School of Medicine and Public Health. "And it's time to take action."

Dr. Golden spoke at a press conference in November marking the launch of AWARE (All-Wisconsin Alcohol Risk Education), a UW Health-convened coalition aiming to help in the fight against alcohol abuse. The coalition's goals:

- Reduce drunken driving
- Decrease underage drinking
- Prohibit health insurance companies from denying claims for crash victims who test positive for alcohol and other drugs

Dr. Golden and other UW Health leaders criticized Wisconsin's weak penalties for drunken driving. The only state that treats a first OWI offense as a citation rather



UW Health leadership supports AWARE: (l-r) Robert Golden, M.D.; Donna Katen-Bahensky, UW Hospital and Clinics president and CEO; Jeffrey Grossman, M.D., UW Medical Foundation president and CEO.

than a crime, it is also one of only two states that doesn't issue a felony charge until the fifth OWI offense. They also assailed the mindset that accepts and even celebrates getting drunk.

In the 1940s and '50s, many states passed so-called alcohol exclusion laws allowing insurers to sell policies that don't cover medical care for injuries to people under the influence of alcohol. One goal was to discourage drunken driving. But an unintended consequence is that these laws tend to discourage health care providers from screening injured patients for addictive disorders. To avoid bankrupting their patients, doctors and hospital managers sometimes avoid tests that might indicate alcohol impairment.

One of the greatest challenges to solving alcohol problems is identifying people who need help. A promising technique for doing this is called Screening and Brief Intervention (SBI). Emergency rooms in many states are using this technique to work with patients to address problem drinking and addiction. A study published in the *Annals of Surgery* (Vol. 230, Issue 4) found that individuals receiving brief intervention have 48% fewer re-admissions to the hospital. But alcohol exclusions tend to prevent such screening.

In Wisconsin, state agencies will be using a \$12.6 million federal grant to boost screening, intervention and referral services at 20 sites statewide.

Repeal of alcohol exclusion laws is supported by groups such as the National Association of Insurance Commissioners, American College of Emergency Physicians, Emergency Nurses Association, the AMA and MADD.

Visit uwhealth.org/aware.

Wisconsin Department of Transportation

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