



# MADD

Activism | Victim Services | Education

## August 2007

**NORTHERN VIRGINIA**

**Chapter Newsletter**

**(703) 379-1135 \* Fax (703) 379-1930**

**P.O. Box 4248, Falls Church, VA 22044**

[www.maddnova.org](http://www.maddnova.org)

# The Truth

## About the 21 Minimum Drinking Age Law

MADD National has launched a new Web site “Why 21?” at [www.why21.org](http://www.why21.org). This site provides all the facts, statistics and research studies that support the 21 Minimum Drinking Age law, its effectiveness and the undeniable truth that it saves lives. The site also offers information on how alcohol affects the teen brain, the realities of underage drinking, facts debunking common myths and a history of the drinking age law. There are also resources and tips for parents, educators and communities on preventing underage drinking.

Learn why the 21 Minimum Drinking Age law is important to you—regardless of your age—and how it saves lives.

Currently an ongoing debate over the effectiveness of the 21 Minimum Drinking Age law continues to take place on the national level and in communities across the country. MADD supporters can use [www.why21.org](http://www.why21.org) as a resource in your efforts to uphold the 21 law and to help educate those who may not understand why the law is so important.

Here are just a few items that researchers have discovered:

- Alcohol is the number one youth drug problem in America. More young people die from alcohol-related causes than from all other illicit drugs combined.
- The human brain continues to develop into a person’s mid-20’s. Damage from alcohol while the brain is still developing can be long-term and irreversible.
- People who begin drinking in their early teens are at greater risk for becoming alcoholics.
- In 2003, the Centers for Disease Control reviewed 49 studies on the effects of changing the minimum drinking age law. Almost every study found that increasing the minimum drinking age to 21 saved lives with an average decrease in traffic fatalities of 16 percent.

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## Letter from the Executive Director

On June 30th, I had the opportunity to ride along with the Virginia State Police during "Operation Sober Summer." This was a concerted effort by the State Police to crack down on drunk and otherwise dangerous drivers.

The operation started at 9:00 pm at the Division Seven headquarters in Fairfax County. There were 25 Troopers involved. These Troopers were in addition to the normal number patrolling our area on a typical Saturday night.

During my eight hours riding with two different Troopers, I was extremely impressed by their dedication and performance. Their skills at detecting potential drunk drivers reflected very highly on their training and professionalism. During the arrests of the drunk drivers that I witnessed, I was also impressed by how efficiently, yet politely, the Troopers administered the field sobriety tests and effectuated the arrests. I was also amazed at the volumes of paperwork and the amount of time that the DUI arrests required.

As Virginians, we should be very proud of the Virginia State Police Troopers who put their lives on the line for us every day. These men and women deserve both our support and our thanks. It takes a special kind of person to put himself or herself in harms way every day to make sure that the rest of us can travel in relative safety on our highways. The next time you see a Trooper, just give a smile and a nod to let him or her know that you appreciate what the Troopers do for us.

I have reproduced the news release reporting the results of their efforts that one night. As you look it over, reflect on how much safer you were that night and are today because of their actions.

- Mike Green

### **STATE POLICE CONDUCT DUI ENFORCEMENT PROJECT Operation Sober Summer**

**Fairfax** - Virginia State Police conducted a DUI enforcement project Saturday night (June 30) in Northern Virginia. Operation Sober Summer targeted DUI drivers and resulted in 186 traffic and 13 criminal violations. Twenty-five state troopers saturated the highways of Northern Virginia which include the counties of Arlington, Fairfax, Loudoun and Prince William. The eight hour project began at 9:00 p.m. and ended at 5:00 a.m. Twelve drunk drivers were arrested.

The following other violations were cited as a result of this enforcement project:

- 47 Reckless Driving
- 68 Speeding Violations
- 16 Equipment Violations
- 5 Seat Belt/Child Restraint Violations
- 38 Other Traffic Violations
- 5 Felony Criminal Arrests (2 hit & run, 2 elude police, 1 weapon)
- 8 Misdemeanor Arrests

Other DUI enforcement projects will be conducted randomly during the coming months in Northern Virginia. The enforcement projects are part of an ongoing effort by the State Police to reduce traffic crashes by strict enforcement of traffic laws with special emphasis on drunk drivers, reckless driving, speeding and safety/child restraint violations.

## INTERLOCK DEVICES

According to Glenn Birch, MADD National President, sobriety checkpoints and ignition interlocks are among “the most effective tools in place to deter and stop drunk driving.” These tools will save lives and prevent injuries.

MADD’s aggressive legislative strategy aims to strengthen drunk driving laws in all 50 states. In May 2007, the Arizona legislature and Governor mandated alcohol ignition interlocks for all convicted drunk drivers. Illinois, Louisiana, New York, Michigan, Ohio, and Pennsylvania are also actively considering interlock laws.

An alcohol ignition interlock is a breath test device linked to a vehicle’s ignition system. When a driver wishes to start his or her vehicle, he or she must first blow into the device. The vehicle will not start unless the driver’s alcohol level is below a pre-set blood alcohol content (BAC).

Multiple studies have shown that alcohol ignition interlocks are up to 90 percent effective in keeping both first-time and repeat offenders from recommitting the crime as long as the interlock is installed on the vehicle. Furthermore, 65 percent of the public supports the mandatory installation of alcohol ignition interlocks for all convicted drunk drivers.

The New Mexico Department of Transportation reported that alcohol-related injury crashes dropped by 20 percent and overall alcohol-related crashes declined by more than 17 percent in the first year the state adopted mandatory interlock legislation.

Early results from New Mexico make the case for a national alcohol ignition interlock policy if reducing the number of drunk drivers on roadways is a priority.

## What You Can Do

### To Stop Underage Drinking

Underage drinking is everybody’s responsibility. You can help to increase enforcement of underage drinking laws by holding adults and youth accountable for illegal and harmful actions. Contacting local police to report:

- underage drinking parties
- a business that sells alcohol to those under 21
- impaired drivers
- adults who knowingly provide alcohol to minors

Teens drink because alcohol is readily available to them. You can help eliminate teen access to alcohol by:

- reporting underage drinking parties.
- keeping adults legally accountable if they provide alcohol to youth in social settings.
- participating in community coalitions to prohibit the use of fake IDs as well as the possession, purchase, attempt to purchase and consumption of alcohol for those under 21.
- strengthening compliance check programs (checking for proper ID) for stores and restaurants that sell alcohol.
- educating other adults on social host laws (laws governing those over 21 who serve or provide alcohol to minors).

## STRIDES FOR CHANGE

Save the date! Saturday, May 24<sup>th</sup>, 2008 is Northern Virginia MADD's first Strides for Change walk at the Fairfax Campus of George Mason University. Bring your friends, family, and coworkers to MADD's signature walk! Even bring your dog! Enjoy a health and safety fair, kid's zone, survivor area, tribute area and much more both before and after the walk!

Every step taken and pledge made for this fun 5K walk will help raise funds and awareness for MADD's programs and services. Strides for Change will allow MADD to continue to help people in our community:

- by providing free victim survivor support,
- by teaching kids to be smart and safe passengers,
- by teaching parents how to talk to their children about underage drinking,
- by reminding people to designate a sober driver, and
- by continuing support of law enforcement efforts to stop drunk drivers.

**You can sign up today!** Go to [www.stridesforchange.org](http://www.stridesforchange.org). Click on the Fairfax, VA location site and follow directions. You can sign up as a walker, a team, join a team or be a virtual walker.

**Become an Individual Walker** - after you register, create a personal web page.

**Form a New Team or Join an Existing Team**— together with family, friends, co-workers create a team, create a team name and your own Team Page.

**Be a Virtual Walker or Donate to a Walker**— can't be at the walk site? Be a virtual walker or simply make a donation.

**Strides for Change Volunteers**— there are many volunteer opportunities, including pre-events and post-events.

Call Jennifer Cipolla Hamilton at (703) 379-1135 to volunteer today.

Saturday, May 28, 2007

9:30AM

George Mason University

Fairfax Campus



## Volunteer Profile: Sherrie Beach

Sherrie Beach's life was changed dramatically on the night of February 24, 2002, when she received a phone call from the local hospital that her son Carlton Dwayne Beach,



Jr., had been in a car crash. When Sherrie arrived at the hospital she was told that Dwayne didn't make it. "Right then an invisible hand reached into my chest and ripped my heart out," said Sherrie.

Dwayne Jr. was a victim of several bad decisions that night. First he trusted his friend to drive safely. Second the driver decided to speed 80 miles an hour in a 35 mile speed limit zone, overcorrecting the vehicle sending it directly into a dirt bank with a tree stump. The vehicle did three complete flips in the air before resting upside down in the road. Dwayne was in the back seat and died from blunt force injuries

The driver was not tested for drug or alcohol use and was sentenced to a six month suspension of his driver's license, a \$500 fine, a reckless driving charge reduced to a speeding ticket, and 100 hours community service in a hospital emergency room.

Two years later the same driver offered another friend a ride, this time in the back of his pickup truck. The driver again sped and lost control of his vehicle, throwing the pickup down a hillside. The young man in the back was thrown out and the truck landed on top of him crushing him to death.

This time the driver would be tested for drug and alcohol use. The driver was sentenced to a 20 year suspension of his driver's license, one year of jail time for DUI, and 10 years for involuntary manslaughter. The judge suspended eight years, so the driver served only three years in a Virginia Correctional Center. One reckless driver brought two families pain and hurt.

Life has not been easy for Sherrie since February 24, 2002. She now takes one day at a time. With the help of family and friends, she found an inner strength to continue. In recent years Sherrie has become a very active MADD volunteer. She is a trained Victim Advocate, Court Monitor and Speaker. Sherrie has reached out to drunk driving victims in the Fredericksburg/Stafford area and regularly speaks to DUI offenders at the Rappahannock ASAP. Sherrie says that "by participating in MADD not only am I helping my healing process, but I also get to meet and help others whose lives have been affected by drunk driving."

### NHTSA Statistics for Virginia

In 2006, **300 people were killed** in crashes involving at least one driver who had an illegal per se Blood Alcohol Level (.08+), a **7.5% increase** in fatalities from 2005.

### NEW VICTIM BOARD

MADD Northern Virginia is in the process of updating our Victim Board. Unfortunately, we have many more victims whom have been killed or injured by drunk drivers.

If you are a victim or a surviving family of a victim and would like to add a picture and short description to our new Victim Board, please contact the MADD Office at (703) 379-1135.

MADD Northern Virginia Chapter  
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Falls Church, VA 22044

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**MADD - Northern Virginia Chapter  
Membership Application & Renewal**

Membership in MADD is **FREE** and is as easy as standing up and being counted. Please sign up below.

This is a \_\_New or a \_\_Renewal Application

**Tax-deductible Donation** Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please make check out to: **MADD**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_ Please send volunteer information

MADD NoVA office@maddnova.org  
PO Box 4248 703-379-1135  
Falls Church, VA 22044 fax 703-379-1930

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[WWW.MADDNOVA.ORG](http://WWW.MADDNOVA.ORG) - 703-379-1135