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NORTHERN VIRGINIA Chapter Newsletter ♦ February 1999 ♦ P.O. Box 1066; Fairfax, VA 22030 ♦ (703) 352-3944 ♦ Fax (703) 237-6660 ♦ maddnova@worldweb.net

### Executive Director's Letter

Since the last newsletter, your staff has been very busy here in your chapter office. Just before the end of the year, we moved to our new office at 900 South Washington Street, Suite 202, Falls Church, VA 22046. Our new office is both larger and less expensive than our prior home. Thus, we are able to accomplish more public and youth education and provide more support to drunk driving victims with your contributions.

We have also been very busy with a number of projects. The Red Ribbon campaign was quite a success. Our campaign culminated with the Red Ribbon Run, which is discussed elsewhere in this newsletter. We are especially grateful to our volunteers for our successes. If it were not for the generous donations of both time and money from our volunteers, we would not be able to carry out all of the projects that are helping to reduce the tragedy caused by drunk drivers.

As a member, you are always welcome to visit us. Our new office is almost put together (I doubt that we will ever get it fully organized) and we would be happy to show you around. We are on a bus line and there is plenty of free parking. When you stop by, we will be glad to give you brochures and other information to take to your friends, associates, and neighbors. Several of our members have done this and it is a great way to spread our educational message.

### Red Ribbon Run -- A Great Success

The 4th Annual MADD/Nissan Red Ribbon Run was held in Alexandria as the opening event for First Night Alexandria. Approximately 400 runners braved the cold and threatened ice storm to run 5 kilometers on New Year's Eve. The run was a great success for MADD because, in addition to the runners, the spectators saw that drinking and driving is not necessary to have a good time.

All of the volunteers who helped with the race deserve a round of applause. The volunteers, including Mike Austin, Robin Langston, Mary Bossom, Dan & Jill Ingram, Heather Green, Jim Faruki, Anne Shroy, Sara McDonough, John Cerio, David Kelly and Rebecca Wood, who helped with registration and at the finish line did a wonderful job despite the cold and the cramped spaces but we understand that all involved had a great time. There are three volunteers who deserve special recognition for their contributions to the race. Tom Packard, Dot Green and Fred Stilmar ran the race course twice, and worked while doing it, as they put out and retrieved the safety cones before and after the race.

We also want to give a special thank you to Ed Lewis of Nissan. Ed not only helped us to get Nissan to be the lead sponsor for the race, but he also got us a Nissan Quest to be the pace car. I had the pleasure of driving the pace car and it is quite a vehicle. If you are looking for a van, be sure to give Nissan a try.

### Volunteers Needed

We really -- really -- need volunteers for a couple of upcoming events. We will be operating the designated driver booth at Vintage Virginia during the first weekend in June. This event is a chance for us to make certain that those who go to the Vintage Virginia wine tasting have someone with them who is able to drive them home. We do this because we want to encourage everyone who

attends the festival to include a driver who will not be trying the wines. We will be serving free soft drinks to the designated drivers.

In October, we will again be working with Kmart to promote our no underage drinking message to kids at the Kmart Kids Race Against Drugs races at several area Kmart's. This year we will need at least 30 volunteers to pass out MADD materials to the kids. This event is not only a great way for us to get our message across to kids while they will still listen, but it is also a major fundraiser for the chapter.

In order for us to be able to participate in these very important public education opportunities, we need volunteers. Please call the office to let us know that you will be able to help. We will start a list and will keep you informed about the exact times and other details as we get closer to the events.

## Victim Impact Panels

One of the primary functions that MADD performs is to provide victims of drunk driving crashes to speak at Victim Impact Panels. During a Victim Impact Panel, MADD volunteers tell others how the crashes that made them victims affected their lives.

There are two primary types of Victim Impact Panels that we support in Northern Virginia. The most frequent panel is presented in association with ASAP. ASAP is the program that drunk driving offenders must attend as part of the judicial process. The audience ranges from new teenage drivers to senior citizens; they have been convicted of drunk driving. We also conduct Victim Impact Panels at schools. Here we are telling our stories to young people so that they will think about what can happen if they make the wrong choices.

Over the years, MADD has discovered that those who speak at Victim Impact Panels not only help save lives by reducing drunk driving, but the speakers also benefit because they see that something positive may come from their discussing their losses. We have a cadre of speakers in the chapter who have found that they derive real benefits from participating in Victim Impact Panels. However, we are starting to get more and more requests for panels and we need more volunteer speakers.

You do not need formal public speaking training and we will give you all of the necessary help to be a panel member. If this is something that you might consider, please call the office. We will give you all of the information necessary for you to decide if this is something that you would want to do. You can also attend a Victim Impact Panel as a non-speaking guest to see what it is like.

## Victim Support Group Starting

Thanks to the generosity of USAA Insurance Company, the 1999 series of the MADD VICTIM SUPPORT GROUP will begin on March 1. The facilitator will be Sherry Platt and the group will meet monthly. Please call the chapter office at (703) 352-3944 to sign up. We expect the group to fill up quickly so don't delay.

## PosterESSAY Contest Announced

Have you heard about this year's PosterESSAY contest. If you have kids (or you know any kids) in 1st through 12th grade and they have not told you that they are entering MADD's PosterESSAY contest, run -- don't walk -- to their school and ask their teacher why not. We sent out information packages to more than 400 schools in Northern Virginia and hope to get many outstanding entries. However we have heard that many schools have not passed the information on to the teachers. If the kids do not learn about the contest, they will not have a chance to win.

This year's theme for both the posters and the essays is "Strong Enough To Say No!" The deadline for getting the entries to us is in April but many schools will set earlier deadlines for their

students. This is an area where you, our members, can help us by making a simple telephone call. Call your neighborhood schools, public or private, and ask them if they are entering the MADD PosterESSAY contest. If they did not receive our flyer, have them call our office and we will mail them another.

## President's Perspective

MADD has been active in the General Assembly pushing major legislation that will save lives and protect families from drunk drivers. Specifically, SB 1072 is MADD's priority legislation this session.

Covered in the bill are four provisions that MADD supports. To start, we need to send a stern message to repeat drunk drivers by making a third offense DWI a felony. The second provision of the bill would increase the minimum fine for driving drunk with a child in the car to \$1,000. The next provision would allow police officers to ticket drivers solely because they are unbuckled. After all, seat belts are our best defense from a drunk driver. Finally, the bill would make it illegal to have an open container of alcohol in the passenger compartment of the vehicle.

MADD is proud of our friends in Richmond who have taken a strong stand on this legislation. Thanks to Del. Brian Moran our House of Delegates sponsor. We will let you know the results of the session, including how our Delegates and Senators voted, in a future newsletter. Please call your representatives at (800) 889-0229 and tell them that you support SB 1072 today!