

# Police give teens low down on drunk driving deaths

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The statistics also show that eight drivers in the 18-20 age group were involved in fatal accidents, Madsen said. Yet it is a "significant drop over 1983 when the 18-20 age group included 15 drivers," he added.

"We think the SADD operations and other things going on may have had an impact," Madsen said.

The 21-24 age group in 1984 included 16 drinking drivers involved in fatal accidents, followed by 14 in the 25-34 age group, he added.

Interestingly, however, drivers under 19 years old account for approximately 16 percent of all drunk-driving accidents in the state yet this group constitutes only 8.4 percent of the licensed Michigan drivers, said Paul Talagrand, director of the Oakland County Alcohol Safety Program.

The 20-24 age group accounts for 25 percent of all drunk-driving accidents, Talagrand said. But this age group represents 12.6 percent of all licensed drivers in the state.

According to 1983 Michigan State Police statistics offered by Talagrand and Madsen, drivers age 24 and younger are responsible for 41.8 percent of all drinking drivers involved in fatal accidents.

"They are over-represented almost two-fold," Madsen said, comparing the age group's percentage of the state's total number of drivers to the drinking-related accident rate.

Madsen summed up the reasons for the 24 and younger age group's involvement in alcohol-related accidents.

"It's a process of trying to learn two things at once. This group is still learning the skill of driving and learning to drink. The combination of the two quite literally is fatal."

What officials have found is that results of blood tests taken on young people involved in alcohol-related accidents show low levels of alcohol "yet a higher percentage of fatal accidents," Madsen said.

"Their lives are not yet educated. They have low tolerance," Madsen said.

In comparison, middle-aged drivers whose involvement in alcohol-related fatal accidents is lower than the youngest age group have been found with higher levels of alcohol in their blood, Madsen added.

Consequently, young people's low alcohol tolerance and lack of skilled driving experience add up to a higher percentage of drinking-related fatalities, he said.

BESIDES THE variety of alcohol awareness programs such as SADD and MADD, law enforcement programs also exist to try and curb the drinking and driving problem.

TIA, for example, launched a program in 1980 with the help of federal money that combined "both strong enforcement and public education," Madsen said.

Most programs in the past ap-

proached drinking and driving problems on strictly a law enforcement or public education aspect, Madsen said.

TIA's program is called the Oakland County Alcohol Enforcement Team or AET Team, for short. It involves the Oakland County Sheriff's Department, local police and Michigan State Police.

Oakland County is divided into 11 districts. Teams of law enforcement officers representing the local police, sheriff's department and state police are posted in certain areas throughout

the county.

Exactly where these teams will be working is based on information gathered by TIA which provides which streets, days and times of the day when most accidents occur.

THE TEAMS move from district to district, Madsen said. But for the most part the teams work about 20 hours a week from 11 p.m. to 4 a.m. Wednesday through Saturday each week.

While these teams are keeping an eye out for drunk drivers the TIA program also is at work "conveying the message that drunk driving is a costly problem," Madsen said.

As indicated by Conner and Madsen, the detection and arrest rate of drunk drivers since the program's start in 1980 is high.

In the period 1980-83, Madsen said, drunk-driving arrests in Oakland County have increased 50 percent. In this same period, 21,000 drunk drivers were

arrested, he added.

While arrests in Oakland County have been increasing, there's been a 20-percent decrease or 3,550 fewer fatal and serious injury alcohol-related accidents, Madsen said.

Although \$1 million has been spent on the Alcohol Enforcement Team project, officials have witnessed a \$15.6-million reduction in the costs of the alcohol-related accidents.

"It's been very successful," Madsen added.

## Students take the initiative

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COMMUNICATION, PARTICULARLY between teen-agers about the problems with drinking and driving just might help cut the peer pressure that's associated with the problem, according to SADD officials. SADD also stresses the importance of taking care of friends, including taking the chance of saying no to one who has been drinking.

"You're going to have peer pressure all your entire life," said Al Slonim, executive board chairman of Oakland County MADD.

"It's very, very easy to be a sheep," he told students, adding that teen-agers must convince their peers to say "no" to a drink and drive.

"That contract is beautiful because it opens up the lines between parents and kids," Slonim continued.

The MADD official told students the SADD contract is one way to get communication between parents and teenagers started.

Because adults have been unable to solve the problem of drinking and driving, Slonim said, "the job is now on young people."

Most SADD chapters at high schools such as Harrison, North and Farmington in this area, begin with a general student assembly, Hogg said.

"That way all students are dealing with the same information," she said. Then a meeting is scheduled for students interested in forming and work-

ing on a SADD chapter. Once formed, the chapter serves as any other high school service club, with activities and programs that stress the group's purpose.

Their task as a club is to educate other students," Hogg said, about the local SADD chapters.

WHETHER SADD has any impact on preventing teen-age traffic deaths because of drinking is still a guess. But many traffic safety and SADD officials tend to believe the organization is changing student attitudes.

"I think it would be very difficult to demonstrate clearly statistically what impact it has had," said Bruce Madsen, director of the Oakland County Traffic Improvement Association.

"But it's evident in something I hope someone one day will measure is the attitude change that drinking and driving even among teen-agers is much less socially acceptable."

"It's cool" not to (drink and drive) now," Madsen continued. "We've noticed this change."

Hogg agrees that today students are "choosing a more healthier way of dealing with these problems."

But Paul Talagrand, director of the Oakland County Alcohol Highway Safety believes change will be slow in coming.

"Any changes that occur are very slow changes," he said. You're not going to form a SADD chapter in 1984 and see a change in 1985."

## Carioni deaths under investigation

By Julie Brown staff writer

Road in Farmington Hills.

An investigation into an auto accident that killed two West Bloomfield sisters is continuing.

The young women, Vanessa and Lara Carioni, died the morning of March 10 when the car they were riding in collided with another car on Farmington

Vanessa and Lara, Mercy High School students, were passengers in a car driven by Brian Smith, 17, of Southfield. One other passenger in the Smith car, 16-year-old Michael Altman, remained in critical condition Friday at Botsford General Hospital in Farmington Hills.

"The boy is in grave condition, but

he's hanging in there," said Lt. Ernie Miller, head of the traffic division for the Farmington Hills police.

"WE'RE JUST waiting for the prosecutor's office to issue subpoenas for the hospital records," Miller said. Hospital records are needed for Laura Pink, 21, of Birmingham, the driver of the car that collided with the Smith car.

"We have to get her hospital re-

ports," he said. Farmington Hills police are also waiting for Smith's best test results from the Michigan State Police in Lansing.

A State Police accident reconstructionist, Larry Richardson, spent Tuesday, Thursday and Friday reviewing the accident.

"We're just in a holding pattern," Miller said Friday. "It's a waiting game for us right now."

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