

Candlelight vigil remembers victims

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drive, all victims to the same grief, said Penny Bien, MADD public relations coordinator.

They came from all over Oakland County, from different backgrounds and vocations.

And when Greg Bien, MADD president, began the opening ceremonies,

the tears began.

Suddenly, as if given permission, they allowed themselves to grieve once more as Bien read a short speech.

"(They) should be preparing for a happy holiday season but can't," Bien said. "They should be joining us for Christmas dinner; but won't."

"They have more than a common cause of death. They have us."

MADRIGAL SINGERS from Southfield-Lathrup High School, at the vigil for the third year, performed "We'll Remember You." Choir members couldn't remember why they were invited to sing.

All they knew was that they cared. Nancy Hoffman, a 16-year-old Southfield-Lathrup junior and a member of Students Against Driving Drunk, put it succinctly: "I think it's a worthwhile cause and we all have an obligation to make sure it doesn't keep happening."

Some attended the vigil because loved ones were recently killed in a car accident.

Others were there for the sixth time, hesitant to relive the events that led to a son's or daughter's or a husband's or wife's death, but powerless to stop the compulsion that drove them to share their grief with others.

Those who wanted to share did so with poems that spoke of love and death, of happiness and memories.

"... I am the diamond glints in the snow ... do not stand at my grave and cry, I am not there ... read one victim, who lost her son in 1985.

ROSE MacDonald of Birmingham.

harm hasn't lost a son or daughter. Neither has her 90-year-old mother, Rose Martin.

They attended the vigil because they don't "want to be out there any one else to be victims" of an alcohol-related death.

"I read the articles in the newspaper, I go to the court hearings," MacDonald said. "It stinks. It's terrible." Despite having made enormous strides in changing public attitudes and laws, the number of alcohol-related deaths, down since MADD began its public campaign seven years ago, is rising, Bien said.

That statistic has Farmington Hills resident Martin Krohner, Wayne County assistant prosecutor and first president of MADD, determined to see new proposals to Michigan's drunk driving laws reach the legislative floor in January.

The proposals will attempt to close loopholes in current laws and strengthen punishment for drunk driver offenders, Krohner said.

MADD IS pushing for an alternate detention program that would provide a minimum security lockup and rehabilitation for convicts. Individuals would pay for their incarceration, removing the burden from taxpayers, said Krohner.

"We want the individual to pay his own way," Krohner said. "I think our

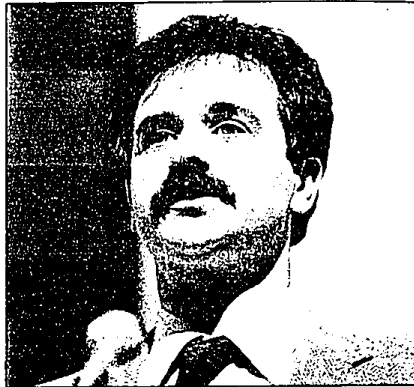
society too often is willing to excuse someone's conduct."

Those at the vigil did not listen to excuses.

They heard only tears of grief and words of comfort as they left the church to begin the holidays with the loss of a loved one.



At the MADD candlelight vigil, Sgt. John Hedrick of the Farmington Hills Police Department Juvenile and Crime Prevention Section reads the names of Oakland County drunk driving victims.



photos by RANDY BORST/staff photographer

"They should be joining us for Christmas dinner; but won't. They have more than a common cause of death. They have us," said MADD president Greg Bien at the candlelight vigil.

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