

# Group campaigns to put cork on drunken driving

BY BILL COUTANT  
STAFF WRITER

A campaign to alert the public to the dangers of drinking and driving during the holidays is emphasizing cooperation and personal responsibility instead of the consequences and costs of such behavior.

Michigan State Police Director Col. Michael Robinson called the "Safe Holiday Campaign" a first in that it has strong support from police, the Michigan Liquor Control Commission, the Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers, the Michigan Licensed Beverage Association, Michigan Department of Public Health and the Michigan Restaurant Association.

Robinson, along with representatives from the first-ever public/private coalition, drank non-alcoholic mimosas (orange juice and non-alcoholic champagne) as they testified for responsible behavior over the holidays, at the Family Buggy restaurant on Orchard Lake near 13 Mile in Farmington Hills Thursday.

But restaurant owner Don Payne, whose establishment does not serve alcohol, said he suspected that holiday revelers were becoming more aware of the stick, not the carrot.

Although motorists would be safer driving the speed limit, it is often the knowledge that a ticket and higher insurance costs are looming in the form of a police cruiser that deters speeding, Payne said.

"We don't want to get into financial liability," he said, referring to the legal problems of individuals who drink and drive and the establishments that serve them.

Although tougher drunken driving laws have had some effect and the state is slightly below the national average for drunken driving arrests, more than 17,000 traffic deaths a year are directly related to drunken driving, Robinson said.

"With all of the violent crime, guns and drugs, we lose three times as many people because of

traffic accidents," Robinson said.

Although Michigan saw an 11.8 percent decrease in traffic deaths from 1991 to 1992, the state has a long way to go, he said.

Mike Lashbrook, president of the Michigan Beer and Wine Wholesalers, said with about 100 wholesalers statewide, the organization is a "natural" in influencing retailers to make the public aware of the dangers of drunken driving.

A holiday party planner, which includes non-alcohol drink recipes, and posters are among the items wholesalers will distribute to retailers, he said.

Maxine Perry, Liquor Control Commission chairwoman, said through education, the commission is part of a "growing effort in the industry to be more responsible."

Robinson emphasized that the public pays for drunken driving through court costs, higher health and life insurance rates, and law enforcement costs.

## Missing man suspect in theft

BY BILL CASPER  
STAFF WRITER

A 41-year-old Redford Township man, who vanished the day after Thanksgiving, is a suspect in the reported theft of \$18,500 worth of jewelry from a Farmington house.

Michael Wiggins, deputy director of Farmington's public safety department, said Friday that the homeowner reported the jewelry missing to Farmington police Thursday night.

Wiggins confirmed Friday that Kenneth E. Overman of Redford is a suspect in the theft because of the opportunity presented him while he was working at the Farmington house replacing windows.

No charges have been filed against Overman. "Obviously we have not been able to talk to him about the theft because he is missing," Wiggins said.

Overman's wife, Gloria, said she is sure her husband was not involved in the theft. She said he is too smart to set himself up like that.

"I knew him to be a man of integrity, and he would not steal anything from anybody," she said.

She added that her husband's boss said the homeowner who reported the theft still owes the company \$2,000 for the window job.

The Farmington homeowner contracted Midwest Construction and Awning, one of Overman's employers, to replace windows, according to a police report. Overman began the work Nov. 15. The report said the homeowner left a house key with Overman, who completed the work Nov. 17. Two days later, the resident discovered his 18-karat gold Sam Cartier wristwatch and a man's 18-karat gold Italian bracelet missing from the house, according to the police report.

The homeowner valued the watch at about \$15,000 and the bracelet at about \$3,500.

The homeowner reported that Overman was the only person in the house since he last saw the jewelry.

The owner of Midwest told Farmington police that Overman is a reputable person and didn't think he would have any involvement in the theft, according to the police report.

Gloria Overman, maintaining her husband's innocence, questioned why the homeowner waited so long to report the theft to police.

Kenneth Overman disappeared sometime the day after Thanksgiving and was reported missing the following day by his wife, according to Redford police.

As of Friday afternoon, police had no leads on Overman's whereabouts. Redford police detective Lt. James Myers said. He said he had no knowledge of the Farmington theft and was not aware that Overman is a suspect.

Overman's pickup truck was found abandoned at about 4:30 p.m. last Monday at Meldrum and E. Jefferson, near Belle Isle in Detroit, but there was no trace of him.

Gloria Overman, 36, said she and her husband of nine years spent an enjoyable Thanksgiving together, but the day after was the last time she saw her husband. The couple have three young children.

Gloria Overman said she has no idea what her husband would have been doing in the area where his truck was found and she fears the worst.

"I'm not optimistic. I miss him, the kids miss him, and I want him back. If someone has seen him, I'm asking them through the goodness of their heart to call police," Gloria Overman said.

Gloria Overman said she knows of no reason why her husband would leave her and the three children: a 2½-year-old girl and two boys, one 7 and the other who will turn 7 this week. She doesn't suspect foul play in her husband's disappearance.

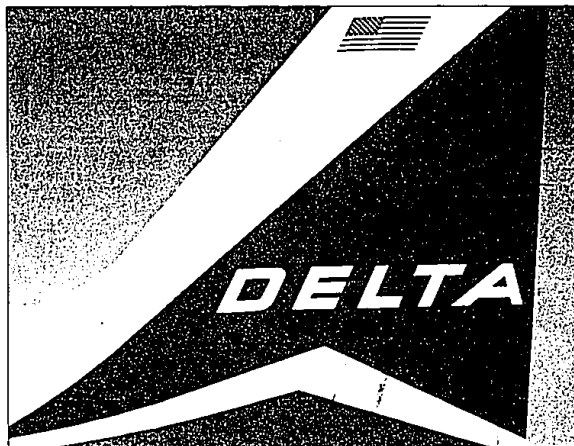
"None of the pieces fit, it's just a mystery. We weren't fighting or arguing. We were getting along quite well. We had a very good Thanksgiving and we were excited about the coming holiday.

"If he is still alive and something has overwhelmed him, we can work it out. We've gone through too much and we've always been able to work things out.

"We have struggled like a lot of families today and we were behind in a few bills, but nothing serious," Overman said. "We both have full-time jobs and we are catching up, but we are living from paycheck to paycheck.

"He always told me he'd never leave me and I believe in my heart he'd never leave, because he loved our kids. He was not depressed about anything that I'm aware of and he's not suicidal. He didn't drink, except for an occasional beer at home with friends, and he wasn't into drugs."

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