Residents air their views on drunk driving

By M.B. Dillon Ward
staff writer

The judicial system's mishandling of drunk drivers has people in Michigan so angry and disillusioned that they are banding together to form chapters of Mothers Against Drunk Driving, or MADD.

About 50 persons traveled to Southfield from as far away as Flint and Kalamazoo to attend Tuesday's airing of WXYZ TV's "Kelly and Co.," which featured MADD founder Candy Lightner.

All had tragic stories about loved ones they have lost to drunk drivers, most of whom have sidestepped the system receiving little more than a slap on the wrist.

At a luncheon following the show, representatives from 10 counties in southern Michigan met to promote the organization of MADD chapters in each area.

FARMINGTON'S JOAN MORAN, who lost her 21-year-old son David in a drunk driving accident in 1980 and has yet to see the man responsible go to trial, is applying for the Oakland County chapter's top job.

"I think by organizing we can make the right people stand up and take notice," she said.

"The prosecutor's office has a standard excuse they give people — they claim that if they tried every drunk driving case it would clog up the system.

"Well people are mad, and the prosecutor's office is going to have to start doing something."

During the past five years, the death toll from alcohol-related auto accidents reached 450 in Oakland County. Injuries numbered 21,000.

There were 287 drunk driving fatalities in the metro-Detroit area in 1980. Of the responsible drivers, only 16 were found guilty and went to jail, some of them only serving time on weekends.

According to MADD, the attitudes of Detroit-area judges are typical of the sympathetic nationwide attitude toward drunk drivers. MADD members say that attitude does nothing to reduce the appalling toll of traffic fatalities across the nation.

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Linda and Greg Reese were told by the Macomb County Prosecutor's Office that the drunk driver who killed their 4-year-old son "didn't commit a gross enough atrocity" to be convicted of manslaughter. Their case was dismissed by the court.

Farmington Hills' Martin Krohner of the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office says that although judges are extremely insulated, they would respond if a scorecard were published indicating who does what in drunk driving cases.

Sergeant Doug Hummell of the Oakland County Sheriffs Department said funds are insufficient and caseloads too large for officers to act like taxi drivers for persons incapable of driving.

Livonia's Lee Landes, who lost his son to a drunk driver, has spearheaded efforts to establish a local MADD chapter since learning how cheap life is in the judicial system.

Photos by Randy Borst

Farmington's Joan Moran has waited more than two years to see the drunk driver who killed her son go to trial.

INSIDE ANGLES

SKIERS, GET ready for a big trip up to Sugar Loaf on March 12-14, sponsored by the Farmington Hills Parks and Recreation Department. Whether you are a downhill or cross country enthusiast, this trip will have something to offer. The downhill package costs anywhere from $70 to $100 and the cross country goes from $55 to $85. Package includes two nights lodging, two all-area lift tickets or cross country skiing, skiing from 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. daily and round-trip transportation. The bus will depart March 12 at 5 p.m from Oakland Community College, Orchard Ridge campus, building H and return March 14 at 10 p.m. For reservations call Doug Gaynor at 474-6115.

THE HONORS WERE ALL for Harriet Gugel who recently retired after 10 years service with the Farmington Community Library. At a recent reception family members as well as library staff members from both Farmington and Farmington Hills gathered to wish Mrs. Gugel good luck. Ernest Sauter, library board president, presented Mrs. Gugel with a gift of luggage. Jim Wibby presented her with a plaque in recognition of her service. Geri Furi composed a special musical tribute entitled "Three Psalms for Harriet." She also was presented with a wristwatch, a gift from the staff. Adding to the party was a skit from the student assistants, "A Day in the Life of Mrs. Gugel," which was coordinated and directed by David Keliher. The cast consisted of Brad Carey, Sally Ebel, Jean Jambas, Sherri Kehus, Tom Rudofski and Bill Starnes. Those in charge of the tea were Pat Bacon, Carole Hund, Barbara Munn and Marti Smart.

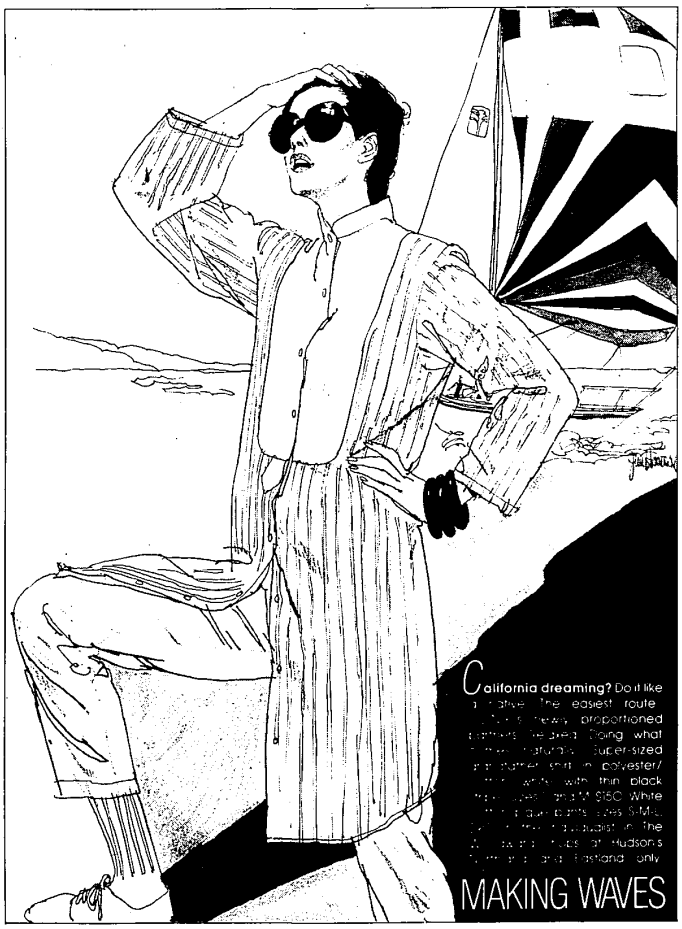
A FEW OF THE participants at the recent Farmington Community Center's Millionaire's Party found themselves to be big winners. Taking away a first prize was John Rohrbeck who won a four-day trip to Las Vegas. A second prize went to Gregory Graves who won $100. Michelle Jakachi took third prize of $50.

ANOTHER BIG WINNER was Farmington's Gloria Slagle who won a gold medal for her first place finish in the giant slalom and a silver medal for her second in a slalom race competition at Thunder Mountain. Approximately 110 competitors took part in the meet sponsored by the Central Division of the United States Ski Association. Gloria is a senior at Southfield Christian High School. She has been racing for about five years and practices at Mt. Brighton and Alpine Valley. The best racers in this program are invited to the divisional championships at Indian Head Mountain in Michigan's Upper Peninsula at the end of February. This competition is held throughout the country and the ultimate winners will get a much-coveted berth on the U.S. Ski Team.

IMAGE BEFORE MY EYES, a highly acclaimed documentary dealing with the plight of European Jews during World War II, will be shown at 8:30 p.m. Feb. 26 at the Birmingham Temple, 28611 12 Mile. The only other Detroit showing of this film sold out last spring at the Detroit Insitutue of Arts. It is based on photographic stills, movies and on interviews with Holocaust survivors. The movie traces the transformation from rural to urban lifestyles, the education, the politics, the idealism and the energy of that generation. Admission is $5 per family, $2 for adults and $1 for children. Tickets may be purchased at the door or reserved by calling the Temple at 477-1410.

ADD A LITTLE ETHNIC flavor to your household by contacting the American Intercultural Student Exchange. The non-profit exchange visitor program is seeking interested families to participating in the rewarding and memorable experience of being a host family. The high school students, aged 15 through 17, come from Sweden, Norway, Finland, Germany, Spain and the Philippines. They will arrive this August. They will attend the local high school and live as a fully participating member of their American family for the school year. Host families with small children are welcome to participate in the program. All host families may deduct $50 a month for income tax purposes. The group also is seeking American high school students, 15 through 17, who would like to go to the above-named countries for the school year or a summer stay. Help make a dream come true for a teen-ager from another part of the world, while you enjoy an unforgettable and exciting cultural adventure.

LONG DISTANCE RUNNERS: attention. If you're looking for the perfect preliminary to the Boston Marathon or if you're an aspiring marathoner looking for an endurance race to test the results of your training, the West Bloomfield Half-Marathon is for you. Scheduled for 12:30 p.m. April 4, entries are due by 5 p.m. on March 29. The 13.1-mile scenic course offers a hilly, winding route on 90 percent paved roads. For further information call the West Bloomfield Parks and Recreation at 334-5660.



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