

Free ride could save lives on Dec. 31

BY SANDRA ARMSTRONG
OAKLAND COUNTY EDITOR

"Drunk driving knows no boundaries," Dave Easterbrook told a gathering of the media on Monday. Easterbrook, a Troy resident, knows first hand the consequences of drunk driving. His daughter, Ashley, was killed in a drunk driving accident on June 3 of last year along with two other teens.

Easterbrook recounted how his daughter had feared dying in an accident, as recorded in her diary entries after another Troy teen was killed just two months before in an accident in Chicago.

"She left a letter," Easterbrook said, in a quivering voice, that said if she were to die in an accident "to let us know she loved us, clearly, she loved us more than we could know."

Ashley's fear, Easterbrook said, has caused his family to become active in Mothers Against Drunk Driving, one of the groups that sponsored the press conference. On hand for the press conference were representatives from state and county police agencies, Judge Brian MacKenzie from 52-1 District Court, J. Minotas from General Motors, disc jockeys from WOMC and members of MADD.

The occasion was to announce Project LifeRide, which will provide free rides home from 9 p.m. New Year's Eve until 5 a.m. the following day for those too drunk to drive. To arrange for a ride, call 1-888-398-6233.

Easterbrook said the long-term way of ending drunk driving is through education, but in the short-term, the best way is through deterrence such as providing rides.

Among those who also spoke were Minotas, who said that "people, not (automobile) defects, not road conditions" are responsible for traffic fatalities.

GM, WOMC, Allstate Insurance, Nordhaus Research Inc. and American TELECOM of Michigan are helping to sponsor the ride home. MADD representatives noted that due to the large number of rides provided last year, a wait for a cab could be expected again this year. So hosts are encouraged to arrange transportation in advance with family and friends, if possible.

Carole Ravichio, a MADD representative who spoke before a backdrop with pictures of those who had been killed in drunk driving accidents, said that in the last two years there were no drunk driving fatalities in the tri-county area. "We'd like to think we had something to do with that," she said, "and make it three in a row."

Helping little ones



Accepting a gift: Fisher-Price representatives presented a \$10,000 donation and toys to William Beaumont Hospital of Royal Oak is pediatric nurse manager Ellen Schneider (standing next to one of the famous 'Little People' characters), Fisher-Price district manager of retail services Kathy Ryda, Fisher-Price national accounts manager Mitch Cooper and Beaumont Pediatrics Chief Jeffrey Maisels M.D. The funds will be used to improve pediatric services, while the toys will be used in the pediatric play room.

Beaumont receives funding for children

TV talk show personality Rosie O'Donnell has selected William Beaumont Hospital among one of only 10 hospitals nationwide to receive a \$10,000 donation and an assortment of toys from Fisher-Price Inc.

Fisher-Price representatives gave a giant \$10,000 check to the hospital's pediatric unit staff and young patients Dec. 2, at Beaumont, Royal Oak. O'Donnell, who is closely affiliated with children's charitable organizations, and Fisher-Price have teamed up in a campaign to introduce the company's newly redesigned "Little People" figurines. As part of the campaign, Fisher-Price coordinated an outreach program targeted to moms and kids, including an effort to benefit children's hospitals. O'Donnell selected the 10 hospitals.

Beaumont will use the funds to enhance children's services, and the will be available in the pediatric playroom. Funds have yet to be earmarked for a specific purpose.

Beaumont was the only state hospital selected for the grant and toys.

OAKLAND DIGEST

Oakland Digest provides a summary of headline stories from around the county during the week leading up to Jan. 1.

BLOOMFIELD TOWNSHIP
Resident sentenced: Bloomfield Township resident James William Breen was sentenced Dec. 18 to 18 to 36 months probation, 250 hours of community service and a \$100,000 fine in connection with a "True prostitution ring." In November, Breen pled guilty to charges of pandering, conducting a criminal enterprise and accepting the earnings of a prostitute.

SPRINGFIELD TOWNSHIP
Body found: The body of a 40-year-old Springfield Township man was found Dec. 22 in a wooded ditch along Dixie Highway. The body appears to have been at the location for some time, according to Sgt. Dale Miller of the Oakland County Sheriff's Department. Miller would not release the man's identity or other details in the case, pending an investigation. The body was discovered by a Holly man who was passing by.

FARMINGTON
High school hockey: A team combining hockey players from North, Farmington and Harrison high schools may soon be formed. The Farmington School Board expects to consider a proposal for a "pay-to-play" ice hockey program during a Jan. 6 meeting.

LAKE ORION

Schools discover windfall: An increase in state aid for schools and a reduction in retirement cost has resulted in new equipment and expanded programs for Lake Orion Community Schools. The district's business manager recently reported that they are receiving \$14 more in state aid.

OXFORD

Christmas tree recycling: Yule trees will be accepted for recycling through Jan. 26 at several Oakland County Parks locations, including drop-off, self-serve sites at Addison Oaks, Independence Oaks and Orion Oaks. Recyclers are asked to remove decorations, string and metal from trees. Also, commercial lot trees will not be accepted. For additional date and location information, call (248) 858-0906 or visit www.co.oakland.mi.us on the web.

ROCHESTER HILLS

Resident takes U-M post: Robert W. Hildebrand, of Rochester Hills, recently was named director of the Center for Engineering Education and Practice at the University of Michigan at Dearborn. Hildebrand has more than 25 years of executive level experience in the automotive and transportation industries.

SOUTHFIELD

Austrian partnership pursued: Southfield's Business Development Team recently met with officials from Klagenfurt, Austria to discuss a joint economic development project. Officials from the southern Austrian city are interested in working with Southfield because of the city's demographic similarities and economic potential, according to one Southfield official. The project would facilitate an economic base exchange between the two communities.

TROY

School board may be rented: School board members in the Avondale Schools District are talking about the possibility of renting the Stiles Elementary building. The school will cease to serve students when the district opens the new Woodland Elementary building in Troy.

WALLED LAKE

Tree trimmers raise money: The Junior Girl Scouts of Troop 1434 in Wall Lake helped raise nearly \$2,000 in the 1997 Festival of Trees charitable event, which benefits the Evergreen Endowment Fund at Children's Hospital of Michigan. The girls decorated a four-foot, Christmas tree, which was a gold ribbon at the event.

— Compiled by staff reporter
Nicole Stafford

Senators cite their accomplishments during past year

With the Legislature having wrapped up work for 1997, state senators representing Oakland County said their accomplishments continued Michigan's tradition of strengthening families and communities.

Senators Michael J. Bouchard, R-Birmingham, Bill Bullard, R-Highland, and Mat J. Dunaskiss, R-Lake Orion, said 1997 legislation built on the state's strong economic environment, educational and family-oriented foundation. They cited as highlights Connie Binsfeld's Children's Commission recommendations to improve the lives of at-risk youngsters; more tools for teachers, including funding under the Durant settlement; Detroit casino regulations and three tax cuts for more affordable higher education, a per-child tax cut and an increase in state personal income tax exemption.

Bouchard sponsored casino regulations signed into law by Gov. John Engler, as well as changes making the sex offender registry more accurate.

"Regulation of the gambling industry is going to be strict,

keeping competition and crime out of Michigan's new casinos," Bouchard said. "We are also making sure that the cost of regulation is paid by casino interests, rather than being laid on the backs of taxpayers."

Bouchard is chair of the Senate Committee on Gaming and Casino Oversight.

Bullard talked about improvements made this year in education and the state economy.

"This has been an important year in terms of educational reform and economic improvements," said Bullard, who chairs the Senate Committee on Government Operations and is vice chair of the Senate Committee on Finance.

"Our economy is the strongest it has been in decades, unemployment is at record low levels, and more people than ever are moving off welfare and into paying jobs," he added. "In addition, schools in Oakland County will receive millions more in 1998 due to settlement of the Durant lawsuit and changes in pupil count guidelines. The benefits extend to the entire community."

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