A car driven by City Councilman Al Simon crunches cones along the test route

**Drinking, Driving Demonstration Shows Reactions Limited By Alcohol Consumption**

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Cajun Field may have resembled a scene from a "Dukes of Hazard" television show Sunday, but the "actors" were local community members demonstrating the effects of alcohol on driving.

Amid rainy skies and gloomy weather, several dozen Lafayette residents turned out to watch the eight drivers who participated in an obstacle course, sponsored by Concerned Citizens chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD), Acadiana Safety Association and State Police.

Geared at showing the public how driving while intoxicated (DWI) can affect driving, the participants arrived at 10 a.m. to maneuver the course while sober.

Before driving the course a second time, each driver drank several ounces of alcohol and was intoxicated to the .06 percent level. He was then taken to a State Police van, where he was tested on a breath-testing machine to register the alcohol content in his blood system.

Each driver took a DWI test run in driver's education automobile while traffic experts graded his performance. The course was then repeated when he registered at least a .10 percent level, the level of legal intoxication.

Two Acadian Ambulance Service units and pathologist Dr. Louis Buettner stood by in case of an emergency.

"There are a tremendous number of variables to consider in the impact of alcohol on a person's ability to function," Buettner said. "Age, sex, body stature, medical history, the presence of other drugs and what the drivers had to eat should be considered."

For example, although District Attorney Nathan Stansbury had eight ounces of alcohol, his level did not register when he took the breath test.

Buettner said a blood test showed Stansbury has "a superb ability to synthesize alcohol."

Several of the drivers insisted they were in control, but did not react sharply to the course.

"I was in control at .06, I did much worse at .11 and I did terribly at .16," said driver Judge Ronnie Cox. "I knew before this test that somebody at .10 was a danger to other people on the road. Now I've been proven. Our reactions were slow and we couldn't do the things we needed to do in an emergency situation."

Lafayette Parish Chief Deputy Hook Robichaux said when he was driving the course, he made a left turn when he should have turned right.

The blood alcohol content level of .10 is a good indicator a driver shouldn't be on the road, Mayor Dud Lastrapes said after driving the course at the .104 level.

"I think anyone at .10 and beyond shouldn't be driving. Whoever picked that level knew what they were talking about. I felt in control and I was concentrating very hard but reflexes and reaction wouldn't be that sharp under other conditions. The average drinker would not be concentrating that hard," Lastrapes explained. "Today was a good lesson for a lot of us to learn. I hope the public can respond and react accordingly."

Other drivers participating in the course were City Councilman Al Simon, Charles Lenox of the Daily Advertiser, Maria Placer of KLFY-TV, Robert Jackson of KATC-TV and Rick LeBlanc of KTSD-Radio.