Drunk Driver Task Force Considers LATAP Revival

By KATHLEEN THAMES
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A drunk driver program similar to the defunct Lafayette Alcohol Traffic Action Program (LATAP) could possibly be successful again, the City/Parish Task Force on Drunken Driving was told last night.

LATAP, a federally funded pilot program, consisted of a patrol task force and driver rehabilitation program. It was disbanded several years ago when federal funding ran out and the city did not pick up the tab to continue it.

Committee member Allen Campo said there may be some federal money available in the future for such a program.

Pros And Cons

A possible drawback, however, is that some matching city funds might be needed. City officials have said the budget is tight because a recent one-cent sales tax proposal failed.

Also, there is a shortage of police officers, so it may not be possible to assign policemen to a selective enforcement team.

Factors which might make a similar drunk driver program succeed include heightened citizen awareness of the problem of drunk drivers, increased interest in the problem by city officials and the creation in Lafayette of private rehabilitation facilities for drunk drivers.

Obstacle Course

The Task Force also discussed an OWI Obstacle Course demonstration scheduled Sunday, June 27.

Sponsored by Louisiana State Police, Acadiana Safety Association and the Lafayette chapter of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD), it will consist of several community leaders first driving an obstacle course while sober and then driving it when their blood/alcohol level reaches the point that they are legally drunk.

The demonstration will be conducted at USL’s Cajun Field beginning at 4 p.m.

In other action, the Task Force established four committees and appointed committee chairmen. They are: Programs, Mary Lib Guercio; Legislation, Dr. May Waggoner; Enforcement and Prosecution, Ray Green; and Public Awareness and Information Distribution, Don Higginbotham.