Harold Brandt, state director of MADD, says much work remains

MADD STATE DIRECTOR SAYS

Drunk Driving Problem Has Yet To Be Solved

By NANETTE RUSSELL
Advertiser Staff Writer

Although Louisianans are becoming more aware of the tragic effects of drunk driving, there’s still a long road to travel before the problem is solved, said the state director of Mothers Against Drunk Drivers here last night.

“It’s important to take a retrospective view of where we came from,” Dr. Harold Brandt told the local MADD chapter at its annual banquet.

He pointed out that two years ago before MADD was established in Louisiana, the state ranked third in the country in alcohol-related deaths. Since then, there has been a 25-30 percent drop in fatalities, and MADD has “skyrocketed” and made a name for itself, he said.

In a recent nationwide survey, 85 percent of those questioned knew what MADD stands for, he said.

Started In California

MADD was begun by Californian Candy Lightner three years ago when the life of one of her twin daughters was taken by a repeat offender drunk driver.

There are now 250 MADD chapter in the United States, and it’s estimated that number will double by the end of 1984.

The reason for the growth is that more than 250,000 Americans have been killed in alcohol-related accidents over the past 10 years, Brandt said.

But, there are still “tremendous inconsistencies in sentencing” drunk drivers, he noted.

A recent case involved a driver with a .17 blood alcohol content level. (Legal intoxication is 10.) The driver was traveling 117 miles per hour, and was charged with improper parking, according to Brandt.

“Somebody thought he was helping him out,” he said.

Released To Friend

In Ascension Parish, within the past two months, a woman picked up with a .18 BAC was released by police to a friend who had a .20 BAC, Brandt said. They were both killed minutes later in an alcohol-related traffic accident.

Another operating while intoxicated offender in Baton Rouge has had six deferrals on serving his time while he attends school, Brandt said.

Within the next few weeks, state MADD officials should know if they can hire the first full-time employee to work in coordinating MADD activities, the director said.

In the meantime, MADD members will continue to watch elected officials to ensure that they implement new legislation, Brandt added. For example, the state’s mandatory license revocation law should have gone into effect on Jan. 1, but is temporarily suspended because officials say state funds aren’t available to implement it, he said.

To Cost $500,000

Brandt noted that it will cost about $500,000 per year to implement the law, and it will bring in $1 million per year.

“How do you put the price on one life? I don’t care what kind of crunch we’re in,” he asked.

In other matters last night, Mayor Dud Lastrapes recognized outgoing local MADD chairman Mary Lib Guercio for her work in combating the drunk driver problem here.

New officers were also installed. They are: Cathy Ritter, chairman; Merle Hunt, first co-chairman; Rosemary Federic, second co-chairman; Raymond Shaw, treasurer; and Kathy Ball, secretary.