TO CONSOLIDATE EFFORTS

Lafayette Anti-Drunk Driver Groups Merge

By DONNA FONTENOT Advertiser Staff Writer

Concern over the growing number of injuries and deaths caused by drunken drivers has prompted many citizens, including victims, to come together seeking action.

In Lafayette this morning, two groups which formed independently to address the problem announced their merger.

Concerned Citizens and Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD) are joining under the name “Concerned Citizens/Movement Against Drunk Drivers” (CC/MADD).

Dr. May Waggoner, chairman of the newly formed group, said at a press conference at the Chamber of Commerce office, “We hope to become a citizens’ group, a community group against drunken driving.”

She says she feels Acadiana, even with its reputation for drinking and parties, “is ready to work toward a new mood and take some action.”

Once people realize our group is not a temperance group, that we don’t want to go into your homes axing beer cans....that we’re just saying don’t mix the two (drinking and driving), I think we’ll get somewhere,” she continued.

Acadiana Safety Association Director Rob Davis said of that effort, “Community interest in drunk driving has generated itself. People are now ready to move before the problem touches someone else.”

CC/MADD plans its first meeting Sunday at Asbury Methodist Church and its first panel discussion May 11.

Seven Main Goals

Waggoner said it hopes to deal more effectively with the problem of drinking and driving through at least seven goals.

Those are:
- Implementation of a strong and continuous public awareness and education program;
- Encouragement of stepped-up law enforcement activity by area law enforcement agencies, including state and city police and the sheriff’s department;
- Work toward proper application of existing state laws dealing with drunk drivers through statistics gathering, court monitoring and encouragement of new laws;
- Tougher penalties for DWI offenders, with emphasis on the “repeat” violator through increased fines, license revocation, and increased threat of jail, and new sentences for repeat offenders;
- Assistance in returning LATAP (Lafayette Alcohol Traffic Action Program) to Lafayette;
- Creation of a minimum security detention facility for DWI offenders.

Sunday’s meeting will be from 5 to 7 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall of Asbury Methodist.

The panel discussion, entitled “Jail Crisis and Innovative Sentencing,” will be held from 7 to 9 p.m. May 11 at habilitation and treatment center.