START MADD CHAPTER

Lafayette Must Move Against DWI Offenders

Candy Lightner spoke in Lafayette a few days ago and since then public interest in the statewide problem of drunk drivers, and especially in Lafayette and Acadiana, is at high pitch.

Mrs. Lightner is the California mother whose daughter was killed by a drunken driver and who now travels the country forming groups called Mothers Against Drunk Drivers (MADD). The question now is, will Lafayette respond quickly to the menace of drunk driving? Response there must be when one notes that in 1980, nearly half of 1,220 traffic fatalities in Louisiana were alcohol-related. In Acadiana, the percentage of such deaths went as high as 70 percent.

Baton Rouge beat us to the punch by organizing the first chapter of MADD. That city is pondering establishing a 15-member DWI task force. Lafayette, too, is working on forming a MADD chapter which is expected to take about three months. And a similar 15-member task force here is “in the making,” a city spokesman said. Gov. Treen set the pace when he formed a state-wide 15-member task force to study the problem.

At one time Lafayette had a fine program, the Lafayette Alcohol Traffic Action program (LATAP), but funds ran out and so did LATAP. Now, in the wake of the resurgence of concern over drunk driving, that pilot program may be reactivated.

The current interest in DWI must be kept alive. One need only look at the statistics and court reports published in The Advertiser to see that an ugly blot on Acadiana is the awful number of drunk people driving on our city streets and highways, maiming and killing others in the process.