

Know When to Say When Head for the Mountains *Friends Don't Let Friends Drink and* Think When You Drink King of Beers Nothing Beats a ... *Drive* TASTES GREAT LESS FILLING Drinking and Driving Don't Mix

MADD's Court Monitoring Program ensures judges do not issue lenient sentences to Bryan-College Station drunken drivers

By TRAVIS IRBY
Staff writer

People drink, people drive, people die. It is a scary reality, and Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD) is trying to curb the drunken driving problem.

MADD members are volunteering as court monitors or Administrative License Revocation (ALR) hearings. The hearings are not criminal proceedings, but they determine whether someone's license can be revoked after being charged with Driving While Intoxicated (DWI) and Driving Under the Influence (DUI).

MADD has monitors attend ALR hearings to make sure drunken drivers' licenses are taken away.

Angela Davis of MADD said the monitors are important to the proceedings.

"If a person didn't drink or drive, then they have nothing to worry about," Davis said. "If they did drink and drive, we are going to make sure they lose their license."

Kirk Brown, A&M professor of soil science and founder of Brazos Valley MADD, said ALR hearings may be one of the most effective tools in fighting driving under the influence of alcohol.

"It's as effective as the judges who administer it," Brown said. "If they take the person's license away, then there is less chance that person will drink and drive again."

Brown said most drunken drivers are repeat offenders, and they drink and drive until caught and sometimes even afterwards.

"It used to be throughout the '70s and most of the '80s, someone could get caught, get in a wreck or kill someone, and they wouldn't even lose their license," Brown said.

Davis said Texas leads the nation in drunken dri-

ving fatalities.

"Texas has very lax laws when it comes to drunk driving, and as a consequence, we lead the nation in drinking and driving fatalities," Davis said.

Brown said things are not as bad as they used to be, but there is room for improvement.

"When they first started the ALR hearings, it was not as effective as it could be," Brown said. "It depended on who the judge was among other things."

"Without any one to monitor the situation, we had no way to make sure people who deserved to have their license taken did."

Laura Mooney, MADD board president, said the slack given to persons who drive while intoxicated is one reason MADD started the program.

"The worst that can occur at these hearings is the license is taken away," Mooney said. "Even then, it isn't physically taken away, it is logged onto a computer, and the only way police know about it is if they stop the driver."

Mooney pointed out most of the time drunken drivers are not caught.

"Studies show only 1 in 40 to as low as 1 in 200 drunken drivers are caught," Mooney said. "It is very important to punish the ones we do catch."

Davis said the MADD court monitoring program helps insure offenders face at least one form of punishment.

"It isn't a criminal proceeding, but if their license is taken away, it will take them off the streets and force them to think about what they've done," Davis said.

Mooney said since the program was started in 1996, MADD's courtroom presence has been effective.

"It makes a difference to have someone there," Mooney said.

Davis said while the court monitor program is ef-



Angela Davis, a member of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD), stands inside the Bryan Municipal Building.

fective, it is hard to find people to do it.

"We need people to get up every Wednesday morning to make sure things are going well," Davis said. "The desire is there, but with jobs and such it is hard to make the hearings."

Brown said if MADD could get enough people to attend the hearings, its effectiveness would be enhanced.

"If the judges and juries know we're there and watching, they will respond in kind," Brown said.

Brown said people do not necessarily have to have faced a tragedy to get involved.

"No one I knew had been killed by a drunk driver, and I wanted it to stay that way," Brown said. "That is why I helped bring MADD to the Brazos Valley."

New state laws increase MIP, DUI and DWI punishments to include jail time and heavier fines

By BRANDI BALLARD
Staff writer

It could quite possibly be labeled as a college student's worst nightmare. It can ruin a party, wipe out a checking account and call for a trip to court.

Minor in Possessions (MIPs) are a reality for students who drink and are under the age of 21, and as of Sept. 1, laws for MIP, Drinking While Intoxicated (DWI) and Driving Under the Influence (DUI) are more stringent.

Lieutenant Mike Mathews said a MIP is considered a Class C misdemeanor, punishable up to \$500.

"Upon conviction, you must attend an alcohol-awareness class," Mathews said. "There is a community service of no less than eight days, not more than 12 days, and your license could be suspended."

For a first-time offender, a driver's license could be sus-

pending up to 60 days. For a repeat offender, it goes up to 180 days.

DWIs are considered a Class B misdemeanor, Mathews said. The maximum fine for a DWI is \$2,000 and 180 days in jail. There is a minimum term of confinement for 72 hours.

Mathews said if it is proven there was an open container of alcohol in the car, the minimum terms of confinement goes up to 6 days and the driver's license can be suspended for up to 120 days.

Mathews said DWIs are similar to DWIs, except DWIs are only given to those who are under the age of 21.

"The minor must have a detectable amount of alcohol on their breath or in their system," Mathews said.

A DUI is also classified as a Class C misdemeanor and punishable up to \$500. Offenders must attend an alcohol awareness course, and there is a provision to suspend the driver's license.

PLEASE SEE MIP ON PAGE 5.



Halfway There dramatizes the dangers of alcohol abuse in the lives of five teenagers

By MARIUM MOHIUDDIN
Staff writer

Last week a local news anchor appeared on a national talk show to discuss his rise and fall due to alcoholism.

The man retold his account of drinking before, during and after the broadcast — how he had to have alcohol to make it through the day.

To look at the man he seemed normal. But to hear the destruction of his life was devastating. He had gone from news anchor to a maintenance worker at a rehabilitation center.

Many people have come forth to reveal to the world the damaging effects of alcohol on their lives in the hope it may reach one person and convince them to change. However these efforts may not be hitting the group where alcohol is a growing problem — the youth of America.

Sunna Rasch, executive director of Periwinkle National Theatre for Young Audiences, realized this problem and created *Halfway There*, a play about five teenagers struggling to regain their lives

after drug abuse.

"I went to treatment centers to help the youth ease their pain through poems," Rasch said. "I had planned to go for a couple of weeks, but I went for a year. Some time later, our sponsors wanted to create a production dealing with alcohol abuse among teenagers. I began work, and I did not realize that I had already accumulated the research."

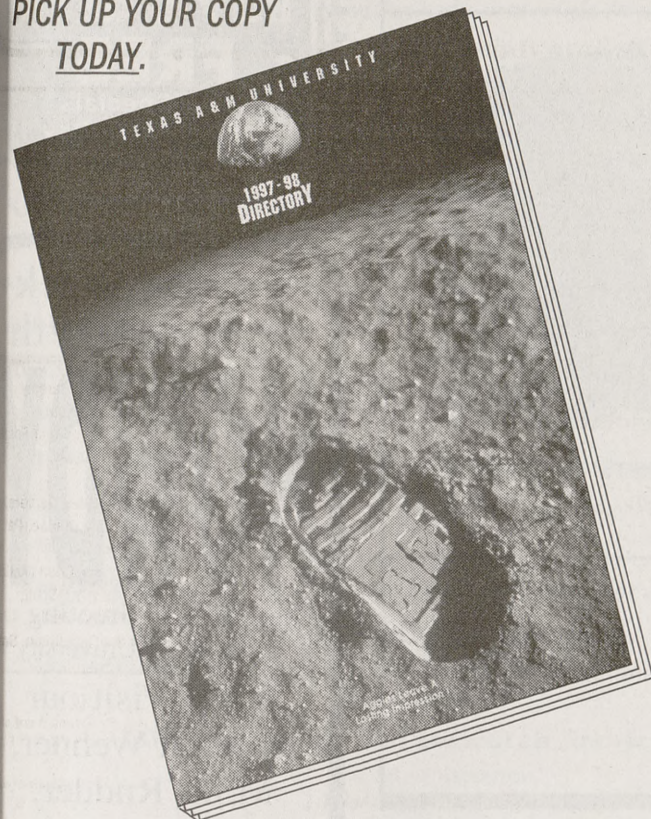
Rasch said this play is about the lives of the youth in the rehabilitation center, their hopes and their will to change.

"I had fallen in love with their struggle," Rasch said. "They were sucked into the peer pressure of not belonging and trying to fit in. So alcohol became tempting and seductive."

Rasch said the set and the costumes were kept simple so the attractiveness and the danger of drug abuse would pour through. The set is reflective and suggestive, allowing the audience to magnify the play with their own personal experiences.

PLEASE SEE HALFWAY ON PAGE 4.

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