

By Karen Sprattler  
MADD National Director of Public Policy

In its 25-year history, MADD has been instrumental in the passage of thousands of drunk driving and underage drinking laws. But without enforcement, these laws are just words on a page. That's why the law enforcement community is critical in reducing alcohol-related deaths and injuries. That also is why one of MADD's top priorities is to support officers and increase law enforcement efforts nationwide—an endeavor that began with MADD's first-ever Law Enforcement Leadership Summit held in 2004.

### Meeting of the Minds

Despite MADD's best efforts, progress in reducing alcohol-related deaths and injuries stalled in the late 1990s. Since that time, alcohol-related fatalities and injuries are once again on the rise. To address this alarming trend, MADD gathered more than 50 law enforcement executives and traffic safety leaders for the MADD Law Enforcement Leadership Summit to discuss enforcement strategies that address the impaired driving problem.

"The overarching goal of the summit was to engage law enforcement leaders in a dialogue about the challenges they face in preventing drunk driving," says MADD National President Wendy J. Hamilton.

Summit attendees discussed barriers to enforcement such as motivation and resource challenges and the complexities of the arrest process. They also brainstormed solutions.

"In developing solutions, we shared some best practices that police, sheriff and state patrol agencies have



**Solutions from the Law Enforcement Leadership Summit aim to prevent underage drinking and drunk driving**

# Protect, Serve and Prevent

found to be successful," Hamilton says. "We examined the science-based research that shows frequent and highly visible enforcement activities have the greatest impact on deterring drunk driving."

The research provides such compelling evidence that participants came to the consensus that frequent, high-visibility enforcement is critical to preventing impaired driving.

### A Six-Point Plan

The summit led to a national action plan to help reduce alcohol-related traffic fatalities and injuries. The report, "Protect, Serve and Prevent: Successful Law Enforcement Strategies to Stop Drunk Driving," includes six science-based recommendations geared toward law enforcement agencies, legislators and highway safety organizations.

The report was released at a January 2005 press conference in Washington, D.C., where law enforcement leaders from the International Association of Chiefs of Police, National Sheriffs' Association, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives and the Hispanic American Police Command Officers Association were in support of the six-point action plan, which recommends:

- Advocate general deterrence approaches to prevent death and injury, such as sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols, which research clearly shows save lives and prevent injuries. For the 10 states that do not allow sobriety checkpoints, MADD strongly encourages state leaders in these jurisdictions to revisit their positions.
- Make drunk driving prevention a priority among law enforcement leadership. While arresting offenders is important for roadway safety, the *prevention* of drunk driving is also critical. Law enforcement agencies must redefine success by the reduction of alcohol-related crashes, injuries and fatalities, not just by the number of DUI arrests.
- Promote paid advertising to ensure highly publicized enforcement efforts. When a community is aware of stepped-up enforcement efforts, research shows that drivers think twice about driving while impaired. Resources must be allocated to make sure the word gets out that drunk driving will not be tolerated.
- Increase resources for high-profile enforcement efforts. Funding assistance for DUI overtime, training and equipment is critical to ensure the enforcement necessary to save lives and prevent injuries.
- Emphasize the need to train officers. The average law enforcement officer receives eight hours of training on impaired driving, yet the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) and the National Criminal Justice Association (NCJA) recommend at least 40 hours of academy training.
- Enhance criminal justice system efficiency and effectiveness. Law enforcement officers across the country face barriers such as limited staff, excessive paperwork, lack of technology and crowded jails that often make it difficult to take drunk drivers off the road. Overcoming these barriers will allow officers to spend more time on actual enforcement.

**Nearly 17,000 people are killed and half a million more are injured every year in alcohol-related traffic crashes.**



### State and Regional Summits

In addition to these recommendations, MADD will be increasing its assistance to the law enforcement community through two new efforts.

Through the generous support of NHTSA, MADD will hold five or six regional Law Enforcement Leadership Summits over the next year. These regional summits will bring together representatives from MADD state organizations, influential state law enforcement leaders and others to hear the latest research and discuss how high-visibility enforcement can reduce death and injury in their respective states. For 2005, a five-state regional summit will be held during the first week of June, an eight-state summit will be held the second week of July, and another eight-state summit will be held in early November. Other summits are planned for early 2006.

MADD also will train and equip MADD activists to meet one on one with local and state law enforcement leaders to offer support and encourage the frequent use of sobriety checkpoints and underage drinking enforcement. As part of this effort, MADD volunteers are encouraged to hold officer roll-call briefings and to develop recognition programs that publicly acknowledge the good work of law enforcement.

In states that do not allow checkpoints, MADD is working to change those policies and will support other high-visibility enforcement strategies.

### Saving More Lives

Since its inception 25 years ago, MADD has helped save more than 300,000 lives. Much of the success has come from working closely with the law enforcement community.

"Keeping the streets safe for everyone can be a daunting task," Hamilton says of the work of law enforcement officers. "That is why MADD applauds those officers who, day in and day out, are on the front lines of the war on drunk driving. It is their bravery, commitment and tireless work that will help MADD save even more lives in its next 25 years."