

Severity of Drinking & Driving Consequences Increasing

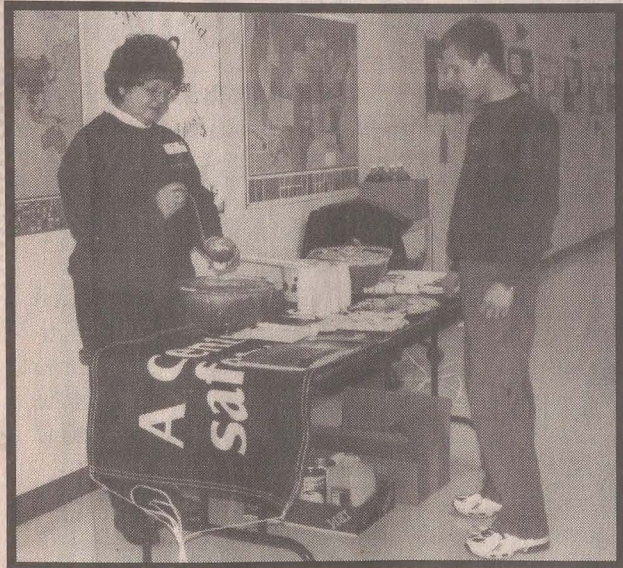


Photo by Sara Lyon
Alice Boyk, Alpena AAA representative, serves Jonathan Brege non-alcoholic punch.

SARA LYON
Managing Editor

It is estimated that 17,274 people die in alcohol-related traffic crashes every year. That's about one person every 32 minutes. Alcohol is a factor in about one-half of all fatal traffic collisions in the United States, and it is also the leading cause of death among American teenagers.

Being the nation's worst frequently committed violent

crime, drunk driving is a serious crime in all states. Drinking alcohol affects your ability to safely operate motor vehicles or any dangerous equipment. In every state it is illegal to operate any motor vehicle under the influence of alcohol. In most states, if your blood alcohol level is greater than .10, you are presumed to be too intoxicated to safely operate an automobile.

However, there is a big nation-wide push to have more states change their laws to .08 as the blood alcohol level considered legally too intoxicated to drive a vehicle. In Michigan, the law stands as .08 as the illegal blood alcohol level.

In the event of drinking and driving and a person is pulled over and found to have an illegal blood alcohol level, the person will be immediately arrested and charged with "Driving Under the Influence" or a "DUI."

Generally, a first-time offender, which is usually considered a misdemeanor, is ordered to pay a hefty fine and may be sentenced to a minimum term of imprisonment. A suspension of his or her driver's license will usually occur as well. In Michigan, an officer will cut up the license right in front of the offender.

There are certain programs available to first-time offenders, which allow the defendant's punishment to be decreased under certain circumstances.

On the contrary, there are a

number of defenses to a charge of drunk driving that an experienced defense attorney can raise on your behalf.

If you are arrested a second time for a DUI, you will have to pay the same fines. However, the time you spend in jail may increase from 90 days to one year. Also, you may lose your license for up to 18 months.

Furthermore, a judge may require you to attend an alcohol abuse treatment program for up to a year. The court may also require you to install an ignition interlock device in your vehicle.

Upon a third conviction within seven years, the fines will increase and you could go to prison for 120 days to one year. Your fourth conviction could be charged as a felony.

If the DUI charge involves an injury or a fatality, you will be arrested on felony charges. A felony conviction will bring you the same or higher fines, a longer license suspension, required attendance in a drug/alcohol treatment program and a longer jail sentence.

Consequently, the fines don't include the cost of an attorney and other fees including court assessment fees, which can be as much as 170 percent of the original fine, raised insurance premiums, the cost of court-ordered alcohol treatment programs, and your vehicle impoundment.

All in all, a person's first conviction can reach well about \$3,000 in fines and penalty assessments.

Some other important things to know are that if you are driving in a reckless manner, an additional 60-day penalty will be added to your sentence. Your insurance will increase not only for you, but also for your entire family. If you have to drive for your job, your employer's insurance rates will go up as well, or you could just lose your job.

Also, upon your first or second DUI conviction, your car can be impounded for one to 30 days at your expense. In the event of a third conviction within seven years, your car can be impounded for 1 to 90 days.

If you have two or more convictions within seven years, your car will be sold and the proceeds would go to the city or county to pay for community-based adolescent substance abuse programs.

Furthermore, if a minor is convicted on a DUI charge, they will be sentenced and fined as an adult, but will spend any jail time in a juvenile correction facility.

In conclusion, drinking and driving is obviously an enormous problem in the U.S. Too many people are being killed because of poor judgment and substance abuse. If you or someone you know has a problem with drinking, call Alcohol-Anonymous for help at (989) 354-2728.

ACC's liaison, Mike Roy, is also available for assistance for any situation or problem you may have. He is available in VLH 119, and at (989) 358-7208.

All the information presented in this article was found at <http://www.hwysafety.org>.

New AIDS Test Yields Immediate Results

JOHN ROE
Staff Writer

Approximately 8000 people test positive for HIV and never return to get the news. It has been estimated that one-fourth of the nearly 900,000 HIV-infected people in the U.S. are not aware that they are infected, according to reports from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

A new 20 minute AIDS test has been endorsed by the FDA. The test allows individuals to learn the results without the standard wait of nearly two weeks.

This test claims to provide results with 99.6% accuracy.

With the speed of the results, the numbers of individuals unknowingly exposed to HIV should decline.

Certified health workers administer the new test. A single droplet of blood is collected from a prick of the finger. It is then mixed with a developing solution in a vial, and the testing device is inserted.

Much like a pregnancy test, one reddish-purple line means no HIV. Two lines assure that there is a probability and more specific tests need to be done. No lines mean that the test was performed inaccurately and should be administered again. It's relatively simple to use

compared to other tests on the market. Waivers may be sought from the FDA by Orasure Technologies, the producer of the test, to allow for the use of the test at home.

FDA Deputy Commissioner Dr. Lester M. Crawford says, "It will also be a critical resource in helping identify HIV infection in health-care and emergency workers who are accidentally exposed to HIV-infected blood while doing their job."

This test is not available at Alpena General Hospital, but more information may be found by contacting the CDC's National AIDS Hotline at 1-800-342-2437.

Calling for Campus Child-care

MARCY L. LAUBON
Huron Shores

It's 6:15 P.M., your children are hungry and your spouse has to work late. Class starts at 7:00 P.M., tic tock, tic tock. Your dilemma: What do I do with the kids? Sound familiar?

Many of our students often experience the need for a quality child-care program. This would enable them to focus and excel in their studies. Currently, campus-services refer those inquiring this service to the 4C's program. This program recommends caregivers in the area.

After conducting a survey of over 40 students and faculty at the Huron Shores Campus, it was determined that there is a desire to initiate an on-site

child-care facility at Alpena Community College.

Why has this not been presented to administration? According to Dr. Curt Davis, Executive Dean at ACC, the topic has been discussed. However, it will probably not be pursued. Dr. Davis stated that, "Most of the needs are being met with at home day-care." He also commented "It would be cost prohibitive for the students. There is also a problem with space availability in which to house this type of facility."

One possibility is that the old graphic art building is currently under renovation. It will become the main art building upon completion, leaving the main art building empty. However, the main art building is out-dated and would need

major work to bring it up to current codes.

The college would have to construct a new building to house an on-site child-care facility, passing the costs on to the students.

It appears that this proposal is not practical. The only possibility for a child-care center would be to obtain funding from an external source.

Here is my food for thought. We are all educated individuals. We can figure this out. For those of us scrambling at night to find a baby-sitter, why not start a support group? Make a list of phone numbers. If enough of us pull together, we can generate a back-up system of family and friends to call on in when that clock goes tic tock, tic tock.

Bovine TB Affects this Year's Annual Deer Harvest Once Again

DAWN TRIM
Staff Writer

Amidst the hype of deer season, the topic of Tuberculosis still looms. What impact has TB brought to hunting in our area, and are we moving in the right direction to eradicate it?

Dave Smith, the Wildlife

Habitat Biologist serving the counties of Alpena, Presque Isle, and Montmorency, based out of the Atlanta DNR office, said that since 1997 the deer population has been nearly cut in half.

The majority of the blame from spreading TB has been placed on the

deer. Hunters have been very cooperative in downsizing the herds. Smith said that there are two very emotional sides to this issue, the farmers who get their livelihood from their animals being TB free and the hunters. Both sides want to see the problem solved. Some people still refuse to

cooperate, so there is still evidence of baiting in the area. Baiting is illegal in the previously mentioned counties. This is a serious infraction and can keep the disease spreading. The penalty if caught baiting is a monetary fine that varies from county to county,

usually around \$75 to \$100.

The number of deer harvested this year is down about 15% to 20% from about 2000 deer last year to 1500 this year. Three quarters of the way through the season the number of TB suspects out of that 1500 was 13, down

considerably from the previous year.

Smith stated that this was encouraging but reminds us that it is too early to say with any assurance that we have in fact moved in the right direction. The proof will be in the culture test, which will not be complete until the end of December.

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