

TRAFFIC SAFETY BOARD MEETING

June 8, 2009 – 1:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Vice-Chairman E. M. Rooney, Sheriff's Office; Bob Murphy, STOP-DWI Coordinator; Will Crandall, Town of Wilton; Tim Williams, Waterford PD; Cindy Dort, Cornell Cooperative Ext.; Judy Ekman, Prevention Council; Thomas Parks, Charlton Police; Andrew Prestigiacomio, Saratoga Springs PD; Mickey Mahoney, Probation; Jim Murphy, District Attorney; Patrick Campion, Ass't. D.A.; Linda Campion, Kathleen A. Campion Foundation; Press

Vice-Chairman Rooney called the meeting to order.

Vice-Chairman Rooney stated we will not meet in July or August, but we will reconvene in September. He said all grants have been received and put in the pipeline, and hopefully by September, you will see some results.

Mrs. Dort stated they spent a week at the Ballston Spa High School doing teen driver safety programs – seat belt use, impaired driving, not only alcohol, but cell phone use, too many passengers in the vehicle, loud music, over the counter drugs, etc. Every student in the high school went through the program, so we saw about 1,500 students, she said. She then showed a brief video of the program. She said the activities were held from 7:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. for a week - - 5 mph crash, seat belt wars, golf cart driving

course using fatal vision goggles. She mentioned excess speed is the number one cause of death for teen drivers, and failure to yield is the second. She said State Farm was there all week also. We make this program available to any school district in Saratoga County, she said. Our goal was to have dialog between the parents and teens right before prom, she stated. She mentioned Ballston Spa's after prom party had 300 attendees. They felt that was due to our course and how it really brought awareness, she added. She said she also did a program at the County's Take Your Child To Work Day, and she will also be at Cooperative Extension's Supervisors' Barbecue. She said the school said it was very well received, and the students made PSA's. The winning class received a cash award from State Farm, she said. Our goal was to focus on all of the issues, and we tried to encourage being a good passenger. She stated the press was not very supportive in this, and it saddened them that they didn't work with them, as the school district had sent out press releases. Other than that, I thought it was very successful, she said. Vice-Chairman Rooney told Mrs. Dort it was well done.

Mr. Prestigiaco stated their mock crash went very well, and the newspapers covered this well. Channel 13 did a great piece on it. He said a hearse, an ambulance, and the fire department were there. He said the kids were very cooperative, and the kids from the Drama Club were made up. He said a couple of mothers spoke who have lost their kids.

Mrs. Ekman stated Mrs. Dort had the support of the school district, but she really was the one who pulled this whole thing together and should get a lot of accolades in this effort. She mentioned the mock crash in Saratoga Springs should be held before the prom for it to have a shock value.

Mr. B. Murphy said there were 15 proms, and the post proms were the best attended that we had, and a lot has to do with the awareness prior to the proms. Enforcement was out there and very well seen, he said. All of the feedback was positive, and it takes a joint effort, and we are really pleased, he stated. He mentioned there are 13 graduations coming up.

Vice-Chairman Rooney stated kids are starting to go to campgrounds without an adult on site, and things like that are occurring now.

Mr. J. Murphy introduced Linda Campion, and her son, Patrick, who is one of his Assistant D.A.'s for the last year and a half. He said the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) usually garners statistics on crashes, but they are changing their definition of what is alcohol impaired. He said they used to include alcohol related fatalities, but now they have said alcohol impaired will no longer include BAC's of less than .08. It appears as though the number of 17,000 deaths that there were in 2006/07 decreased by 4,000. It is confusing to the public that there have been 4,000 fewer alcohol related deaths then actually have been reported. He said NHTSA is only reporting on fatalities of .08 or greater. It is important to keep in mind that the number of deaths relating to alcohol has remained constant, while the new definition seems to indicate the numbers have decreased.

Mrs. Campion distributed copies of handout on NHTSA's Alcohol-Impaired-Driving Fatalities – Q&As. She said she follows the alcohol-related statistics on the website, but they are no longer circulated. She mentioned 17,036 were killed by alcohol-related crashes in 2007, and her husband had seen on the television that only 12,000+ were killed. We reached out to Jim Murphy and NHTSA asking why this was changed, she said. She distributed copies of a letter she received from NHYSA with an explanation. For me, it has redefined the definition of alcohol-impaired driving, she said. Not only has the definition changed, but it diminishes the danger of what can happen under .08, and anything under that does not matter any more, she stated. She mentioned the other 4,000+ people killed in 2007 were not really reported. I am trying to correct the incorrect awareness that is being raised, she said. I am very disturbed by this, she added.

Mr. J. Murphy stated this is incredibly misleading. People who know and watch the statistics are equally confused. Alcohol-related fatalities are not decreasing, he said. If alcohol is involved in any way in a fatality, it is important to document that. Alcohol, no matter what the level, affects reaction time and can hamper people's awareness, he stated. Mr. Campion stated .05 is a presumption you are impaired. Mr. J. Murphy said no matter what amount of alcohol, people who are less than 21 years of age who crash do not count if it is less than .08.

Vice-Chairman Rooney asked Mrs. Campion if people understand what she is trying to do. Mrs. Campion said yes, Channel 13 took the statistics off the air. Mrs. Ekman asked if MADD has taken a stand on this. Mrs. Campion said they are using the NHTSA statistics. She thanked the Board for the opportunity to be here today.

Mrs. Ekman stated the after proms were notably successful this year, and that is a good sign. We are hearing about the breaking up of the teenage parties, and she encouraged the agencies to let them know when those circumstances occur so that they have this information for their grants for the party patrols and TIPS training. These are federal grants that get released on a competitive basis, she said. She pointed out Saratoga Springs had a car parked where there was rumor there was going to be a party, and there was no party, so that made a big difference. Outcomes are really helpful on our grant requests, she said.

Mr. Crandall said NHTSA issued a report on speeding and DMV fatalities for 2000/2001, and racing is almost non-existent in fatalities, and he said he does not see how that can be. He mentioned 11,000 to 12,000 speed related fatalities occur per year. He said over the limit of 50 – 60 mph speeds are serious. He mentioned he will be attending a NYSTAR seminar on Thursday. He said there is accident reconstruction software out now for snowmobile accidents. People can help you firm up your case, he said.

Mr. Prestigiacomo said they had the Tour De Cure this past weekend, and there was a lot of traffic.

Mr. B. Murphy said every year on the last day of classes, the kids are pretty glad to get out, and they do get out of there. Saratoga Springs High School has more than 450 student cars there, he said. He said everyone has 16 additional hours for June, July and August, and he has told the schools we are making enforcement aware of the last day of classes. Mrs. Ekman said that is pretty much Friday. Mr. B. Murphy said there is Regents also.

Mr. B. Murphy said he has had a few calls regarding Those Who Host Lose The Most, and he has been explaining this to parents.

Mrs. Ekman said they received an extension on their latest enforcement grant. If anyone wants overtime for party patrols, they have to do their final accounting by June 30th, and they have quite a bit left in this.

Mrs. Dort mentioned when they were at the Ballston Spa High School, the worst attended event was Thursday evening when the ADA was there to talk to parents. One parent was there, she said. She stated that is pretty much the problem they face – the parent piece. We do not make much progress with the adults, she added.

Mrs. Dort said Channel 13 interviewed her on bike helmets. She said she has been doing a lot of fittings in the last few weeks. It is a law that children under 14 wear bike helmets. Vice-Chairman Rooney asked what the threshold is on free helmets? Mrs. Dort said they get referrals from WIC, Head Start, etc., but they will give helmets to those who need one. Law enforcement could be a bigger help, not by giving out tickets, but by taking the child home who is not wearing a helmet while riding a bike, she said. We have about 1,000 helmets, she said. She mentioned Saratoga Springs has suspended their child car seat program for a while. She stated there is a car seat check Friday at Sears in Colonie. She said she will be teaching a class all next week, but no one from the County is taking the class. Mr. Prestigiacomio asked Mrs. Dort if he could refer kids to her for bike helmets, and she said yes.

**** NEXT MEETING – MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 14TH AT 1:00 P.M. ****

The meeting was adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine M. Sodemann