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Drunken drivers targeted through Labor Day weekend

By Mary Beth Almond
C & G Staff Writer

METRO DETROIT — Law enforcement agencies in 55 counties are taking to the streets for the statewide “Over the Limit. Under Arrest.” end-of-summer drunken driving crackdown.

The effort, which began Aug. 15, means additional federally funded drunken driving patrols are out through Labor Day.

In Macomb County, police in Clinton Township, Center Line, Chesterfield Township, Eastpointe, Fraser, Richmond, Roseville, Shelby Township, Sterling Heights, St. Clair Shores, Utica and Warren — in addition to the Macomb County Sheriff’s Office — are targeting drunken drivers.

“It’s another one of those efforts to enhance what we do on a daily basis by putting some overtime deputies out there to crack down (on drunken) drivers and arrest them,” Macomb County Sheriff Mark Hackel said.

Hackel said drunken driving is taken very seriously in his jurisdiction.

“We arrest people every day. Now, we have tips from cell phone callers saying they see someone driving on the road that looks like they’re drunk, and we try to get a car to their area,” he said.

In Oakland County, police in Auburn Hills, Bloomfield Township, Farmington Hills, Ferndale, Hazel Park, Madison Heights, Milford Village and Township, Novi, Pontiac, Southfield, Troy, Waterford Township and West Bloomfield, along with the Oakland County Sheriff’s Office, are joining in on the crackdown.

“We’re participating to do all we can to take drunk drivers off the road. If somebody’s been drinking and driving, it substantially increases the probability that not only they will get into an accident, but there might be an injury in the accident, or a death, to themselves or others,” Oakland County Sheriff Michael Bouchard said.

The Oakland County Sheriff’s Office is unique, Bouchard said, in that they are the only agency in the state that has a full-time alcohol enforcement unit that is dedicated to taking drunks off the road.

“Since their inception a number of years ago, they’ve taken 12,000 drunk drivers off the road. We believe that has saved countless lives,” he said.

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Bouchard said the crackdown is an important reminder that Michigan's drunken driving laws are strictly enforced.

"I think there is a lot less tolerance for it within the community in general. Forty years ago it used to be "let's have one for the road," and that's just not acceptable in any environment now. There has been a change in community standards and acceptance of it," he said.

Last year, nearly 50,000 motorists were arrested for drunken driving, according to the Michigan Office of Highway Safety Planning.

"We always seem to have the prevalent problem that when people decide to drink, they don't think, and put themselves behind a wheel. The unfortunate reality is that people drink, and the more they consume, the less ability they have to think appropriately and make rational decisions," Hackel said.

Office of Highway Safety Planning Director Michael L. Prince said drinking and driving just don't mix.

"The consequences of a drunk driving conviction are serious and real, and can result in significant personal and financial costs," he said.

Those convicted of drunken driving face penalties, including fines up to \$500, up to 93 days in jail, up to 360 hours of community service, six points on their driver's license, driver responsibility fees of \$2,000, higher insurance rates and an automatic six-month license suspension.

For a listing of enforcement times, dates and locations, visit www.michigan.gov/ohsp.

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