

MADD Red Ribbon Week: Many call for end to carnage

Written by Justin Reynolds

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Paula Dagostino, development officer for MADD of Connecticut, spoke to members of the community Tuesday at town hall, as Chief Edward Kulhawik and First Selectman William Brennan looked on. MADD launched its red ribbon campaign this week.
—Justin Reynolds photo

Statistics don't lie. More drunk driving fatalities occur during the Thanksgiving through New Year's Day holiday season than at any other time of the year. To combat this trend, Mothers Against Drunk Driving kicked off its red ribbon campaign in Wilton on Tuesday at the town hall.

The campaign — Tie One on for Safety — is designed to spread awareness throughout communities by encouraging residents to tie red ribbons onto their cars.

“We urge you to tie a red ribbon on your car and take a pledge not to drink and drive,” said Paula Dagostino, MADD's development officer for Connecticut.

Having started in 1986, the campaign is MADD's longest-running program, Ms. Dagostino said, adding its ultimate goal is to eliminate drunk driving altogether.

“We know we can reach that goal with the help of the public,” she said.

Ms. Dagostino said that in 2006, 113 people were killed in drunk driving accidents in Connecticut. In 2007, that number decreased to 101.

“Yes, we've saved 12 lives,” but still lost 101, a number that is unacceptable, she said.

First Selectman William Brennan said drunk driving was a serious problem and that the community must raise consciousness of it to arrive at a solution.

“We need to end this carnage,” Mr. Brennan said. “It's an enormous task. We ask the citizens of Wilton to respond by supporting this program and putting red ribbons on their cars.”

Police Chief Edward Kulhawik said the fact that Dr. Gary Richards, superintendent of schools, Cathy Pierce, director of social services, Colleen Fawcett, youth services coordinator, and members of the police department, fire department and EMS all came out to support the campaign showed what makes Wilton special.

“It says a lot about the commitment level of those involved in the community,” he said. “We're all

invested in this community.”

Chief Kulhawik said the police department makes about 110 drunk driving arrests per year, and is “very aggressive” in enforcing the law.

“Our goal is to not have any arrests, as long as we know people aren’t driving drunk,” he said.

Those interested in supporting the campaign may pick up a red ribbon for free at town hall or the police station.

Youth to Youth

Wilton’s Youth to Youth program is planning several activities at Wilton High School and Middlebrook School in celebration of Red Ribbon Week.

At the high school, statistics and quotes about drug and alcohol prevention were put up throughout the school. Teachers have been asked to make copies of handouts on red paper, and students in Youth to Youth will wear red T-shirts.

At Middlebrook, students were asked to wear various articles of red clothing each day. Students and staff have worn red ribbons all week. This afternoon, a concert by Tiffany Giardina, a 15-year-old pop singer and songwriter, is planned as a recycling club fund-raiser.