



# Parents Make A Difference!

## Teens, Vehicles and Alcohol

March 2008

The combination of teens, vehicles and alcohol can have tragic and deadly consequences. According to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration (NHTSA), young drivers between the ages of 15-20 are more often involved in alcohol related crashes than any other age group. The NHTSA also reports in 2002 that 29% of young drivers (age 15-20) who had been drinking alcohol and were involved in fatal crashes were not wearing seatbelts.

### Teens and Designated Drivers

Research from the recent Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS) of 3727 7<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> graders found that when asked "if you drink alcohol, where do you do it most often?", less than 2% of all teens who drink alcohol respond "in a car, truck or van". Yet, 40% of all males who drink alcohol never or rarely use a designated driver. One third (33%) of females say they never or rarely use a designated driver when they and their friends go out and consume alcohol. Conversely, 40% of females who drink and 32% of males who drink, say they always use a designated driver when they and their friends go out and drink. The chart in the next column looks at the use of designated driver by gender and grade level. It shows that female drinkers in the upper grades are more likely to report that they always use a designated driver than females in the middle school. This is not the case for males.

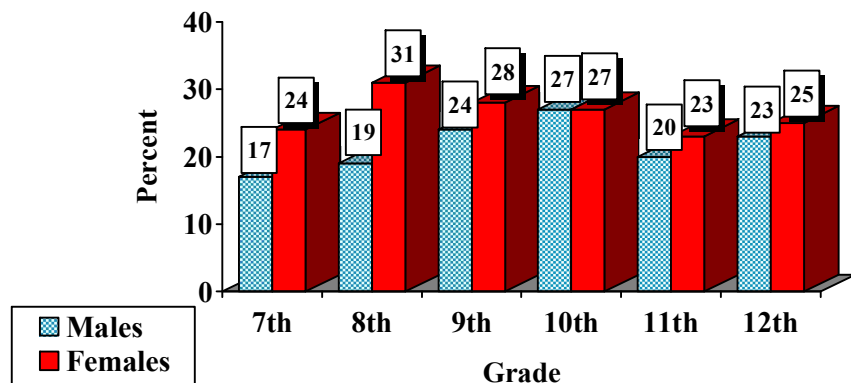
### Responses to the question, "if you and your friends go out and consume alcohol, how often do you use a designated driver?", by Southwest Wisconsin Teens who drink.

	Never or Rarely use a designated driver		Always use a designated driver	
	Males who drink	Females who drink	Males who drink	Females who drink
7 <sup>th</sup>	80%	57%	15%	26%
8 <sup>th</sup>	44%	27%	35%	29%
9 <sup>th</sup>	50%	44%	28%	32%
10 <sup>th</sup>	39%	33%	31%	38%
11 <sup>th</sup>	31%	24%	43%	51%
12 <sup>th</sup>	39%	27%	28%	41%

### Riding with A Driver Who Has Been Drinking

In addition to the use of designated drivers, SWYS also looked at how many teens in the past 30 days have ridden with a driver who was drinking alcohol. Specifically, the survey asked, "during the past 30 days how many times did you ride in a car or another driven by someone who had been drinking alcohol?" The graph below shows that 8<sup>th</sup> grade females were most likely to respond "yes" to this question.

Southwest Wisconsin Teens Who During the Past 30 days Have Ridden With A Driver Who Was Drinking



It is important to note that the survey did not ask if the driver who was drinking was a teen or an adult. Still, about one-fourth of the students in grades 10-12 report having ridden with a driver who has been drinking in 30 days previous to the survey. Also SWYS found that 3% of teens reported riding with a driver who had been drinking at least six times in the year previous to the survey.

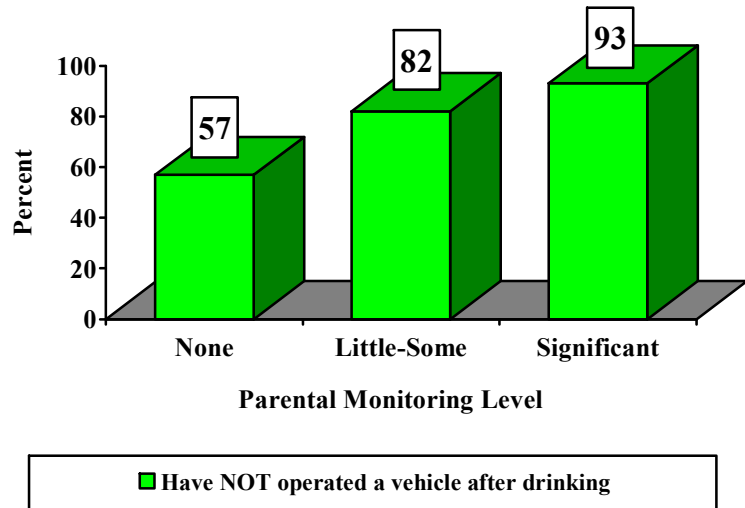
## Drinking and Driving

SWYS also explored the issue of teen drinking and driving. The survey asked teens “during the past 30 days how many times did you drive a car or other vehicle when you had been drinking alcohol?” Overall 89% of students in grades 7-12 reported that they had never operated a motor vehicle after drinking. However, nearly one-fourth (24%) of 12<sup>th</sup> grade males responded yes, as did 15% of 11<sup>th</sup> grade males, 22% of 12<sup>th</sup> grade females and 22% of 11<sup>th</sup> grade females.

### PARENTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE!!!

An analysis of student responses to SWYS has found that parent practices can make a difference as to whether or not teens decide to drink and drive. The survey looked into teen perceptions of how consistent their parents were when it came to eight practices related to parental monitoring. The teen’s perceptions of these practices (*knowing where their teen is, expecting the teen to call if they were going to be late, knowing the teen’s friends and the parents of their friends, knowing the teens plans when they are out, etc.*) were compared to teen responses regarding whether or not the teen had ever operated a motor vehicle after drinking or using drugs. **The chart at the top of the next column shows that high levels of parental monitoring were associated with higher rates of sober driving.**

Teens Who Have Not Driven After Drinking



### 5 WAYS PARENTS CAN HELP

- ❖ **Teach** your child the risks associated with drinking and driving as well as riding with a driver who has been drinking. Open communication is crucial and can begin when your children are very young.
- ❖ **Encourage seatbelt use** and set an example by wearing one yourself.
- ❖ **Delay licensing** until your teen is ready. Studies have shown that delayed licensing does reduce crashes. Although the law allows licensing at 16, as a parent you decide when to sponsor your teen driver.
- ❖ **Set curfews** and enforce them. Prohibiting or limiting teen driving at night can help avoid potentially dangerous situations.
- ❖ **Offer “a free call home”**. Let your child know that if he or she does drink or is with a driver who has been drinking, they can call home for a ride without fear of consequences that night. The next day discuss the incident and determine how best to avoid the problem in the future.

Adopted from the American Academy of Pediatrics web site.

“Parents Make a Difference” is a product of the Southwest Wisconsin Youth Survey (SWYS), a program of the University of Wisconsin-Extension, local school districts and UW-Platteville. This newsletter is adapted from the UW-Extension “Whose Kids?...Our Kids!” Teens, Vehicles and Alcohol newsletter which was originally written by Tom Schmitz et. all. This issue of “Parents Make a Difference” was written by Tom Schmitz and Megan Cooley UW-Extension Grant County and edited by Jessie Potterton, UW-Extension Lafayette County, Bev Doll, UW-Extension Grant County, Amy Mitchell, UW-Extension Crawford County and Pam Hobson, UW-Extension Richland County. Thanks are extended to the 3,727 7th to 12th graders from southwest Wisconsin who participated in the 2005 SWYS survey. Contact UW-Extension [www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/grant/tap/SWYS2005.html](http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/grant/tap/SWYS2005.html) for further information: Grant County (608) 723-2125; Lafayette County (608) 776-4820; and Richland County (608) 647-6148 and Crawford County (608) 326-0224.

