In the news ... In the news

Deadly lesson in driving drunk

By AIMEE STONE
Editor-in-Chief

The December holiday season is traditionally one of the most dangerous for motorists. Because of that, December has been designated as National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month (3D).

According to the Pennsylvania Driving Under the Influence Association, the group raising the most concern are people aged 16-21.

Of the 1,800 students that attend Penn State Delco, the majority of the students fall in that age group.

To create awareness in young drivers, PADUI in collaboration with Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) will be visiting schools across the state to demonstrate their new specially engineered Safety Bug.

The Safety Bug made its debut at Delco last month. The main parking lot was set aside for the demonstration while students stood by in awe or attempted to drive.

Although the Bug was meant to create awareness on the campus, many students wandered around laughing at the simulated driving. In the case that the Bug was not enough to deter students from driving under the influence, the following is a collection of numbers from the PADUI website.

In 1999 alone, 528 people died in alcohol related accidents. Of the 528, 68 percent were driving and the other 32 percent were passengers or just innocent pedestrians. People injured in alcohol related accidents reached 13,438.

Alcohol related accidents are at the highest within the past decade, reaching more than 14,000 crashes. That is up almost 300 from 1998.

Between the ages of 16-25, 4,480 people were drunk drivers in an accident. That would mean that the ratio of students in accidents may be 2:4, or 50 percent.

There could be a chance then, that half of Delco's student body may be involved in alcohol related accidents.

Students need to be aware of the statistics facing them, and be sure they do not become another number in next year's stats.

Be aware of the roads during the holiday season. You may be sober, but someone else on the road may not be.

For those of you who may be throwing holiday parties, here are a few tips to make sure everyone will arrive home safely:

As soon as the guests arrive, collect their car keys. Some may argue about it. If that happens, either don't allow them in until they hand over their keys, or later on distract them and then obtain their keys. Once all the keys are collected, lock them away in a place guests will most likely not stumble into. Also, as a host or hostess to the party, you should not drink too much.

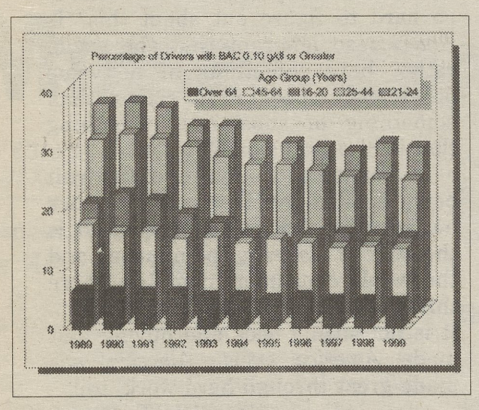
Be sure to serve food high in cholesterol and protein like cheese and meats. The high protein content will slow the absorption of alcohol.

If you decide to make a punch, use a non-carbonated base like juice. The weight of the juice will also slow the absorption of alcohol.

Be sure to stop serving alcohol about two hours before the party is to end. The best way to do this would be to sneak a few bottles of liquor away at a time. That way, when the guests begin to complain, you can simply say that they have drank everything. If you have kegs and beer, the same thing goes.

Take heed of these warnings and suggestions. We all don't want to begin next semester with one less student because of someone's irresponsibility.

From all of us at The Lion's Eye, have a safe and accident-free holiday season.



The chart at left shows the number of intoxicated drivers in fatal crashes by age group in the years between 1989 and 1999. The highest intoxication rates in fatal crashes in 1999 were recorded for drivers 21-24 years old (27 percent), followed by ages 25-34 (24 percent) and 35-44 (21 percent).

Safety Bug is a valuable learning tool

By AIMEE STONE
Editor-in-Chief

On Friday Nov. 17, I, along with fellow students, accepted the mission to drive the Safety Bug.

The Safety Bug was specifically designed for Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) and the Pennsylvania Driving Under the Influence Association as an innovative program for teens which allows them to experience "real-life" alcohol impairment without the "real-life" risks.

The Bug was engineered to simulate impaired driving due to alcohol. To demonstrate this, the Bug swerves from side to side and loses complete control. All students with a valid driver's license were able to drive the Bug.

Many students around campus seem to believe they drive better after a few drinks. The experience of the Safety Bug quickly diminished that mentality.

"I thought I would drive better than I did," said freshman Kim Long. "It was really difficult."

Throughout the day, the main parking lot was covered with remnants of orange cones. The cones were meant to line the pathway for the Bug. Yet many of the cones were crushed, dragged and destroyed.

My personal experience with the Bug left every cone for itself. Like other students, I also thought driving the Bug would be easy. But like so many other occasions, I was proven wrong.

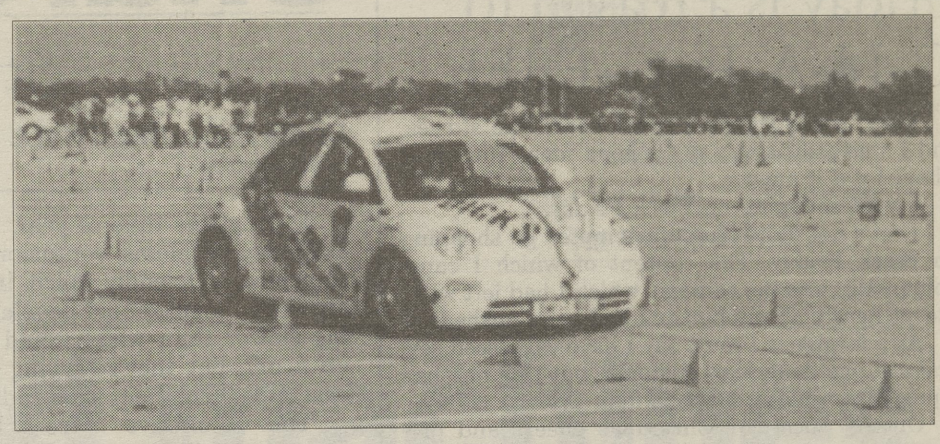


Photo courtesy of www.padui.org/bug_tx.htm

Te Safety Bug navigates a course though cones. Most drivers of the Bug collide with cones and skid where they think they're going to stop perfectly.

With the accompaniment of a trained mentor in the passenger seat, my friend Christina and Channel 10 news in the back seat, I was ready to go.

My front passenger quickly went over the purpose of the Bug and its attributes. Then he asked me to accelerate the car to 20 mph. Once I reached 20, my mentor asked me to stop. Suddenly and completely out of control, the Bug swerved to the left and took out about 20 innocent cones and a close call on the stop sign.

I got back on track and was once again asked to accelerate to 20. I did and was again asked to stop. This time I thought I would definitely stop by slowly pressing the brakes until I stopped. Well, of course, I was wrong. Not only did I take out about another 20 cones, but I almost hit a parked car.

My friend Christina was about to have a heart attack and was left breathless from all her screaming.

With the sound of a few cones dragging underneath, I eventually arrived back to the starting point. The Channel 10 cameraman quickly escaped and ran like hell back to his van.

I got out of the car laughing as if the experience was hilarious. But what if it was real? My knees were shaking at the thought of the experience being real.

Many may think the Bug was meant to simulate a driver that has been drinking all night. But it only simulates the effects of about five drinks.

As a campus that has had the unfortunate privilege to witness what happens when someone drives drunk, I hope that all of us who drove the Bug learned a valuable lesson.

I also hope that during the holidays students will show their maturity by asking someone sober to drive them home. No one wants to see another death on this campus.

Delco asks: What's the frequency, Kenneth?

■ Penn State students eye starting a radio station on the campus.

By ADAM WOJCIECHOWICZ
Staff Writer

Most major colleges around the country have a campus radio station broadcasting in the area. It's a great forum for up-to-the-minute notices, campus information, and to express student views.

Actually, a campus radio station can be very handy.

Penn State Delco students and staff have been hoping for the chance to get a campus station up and running. Soon, they may soon get the chance.

"Right now there are no radio frequencies available for the area," said Dan Zacher, a student involved with the creation of the radio station.

But this doesn't completely knockout the school's chances for a radio station. The Federal Communication Commission, which regulates the airwaves, shifts numerous band frequency licenses from time to time.

At some point in the next year, a limited number of licenses will become available. The university stands a good chance of obtaining one of these by applying early, according to Dave Skalish, an engineer at KYW.

Both FM and AM bands are options, but obviously only one is necessary. Each has its own advantages and disadvantages.

FM band tend to be more powerful than AM, although much less powerful than that of a professional commercial station like Y-100 down the road. If the campus did obtain a FM band, it would only have a range of about two to three miles. This is not enough to efficiently announce school closings or bomb threats before students are already on the road.

The other problem with a FM band is the cost of equipment. According to Skalish, the price of equipment may range from $15,000-$20,000, but could be decreased if the school purchased used equipment.

The radio station could also carry advertisements for places like the Granite Run Mall, thus brining in revenue and perhaps cutting costs further.

An AM band would offer a range that does not extend off the Delco campus, but would be dramatically less expensive in terms of equipment. This smaller range, as well as a larger FM band, would at least suffice for the airing of notices along the lines of club advertisements and registration information.

It is uncertain whether or not the FCC will charge the university a fee for the actual license to any band.

The ideal choice for a campus radio station would be one that extends several more miles than is currently prospected, but at a minimum expense. This opportunity may arise in time, as FCC licenses change hands.

"I think that this could still be good thing with the limitations that face us," said Zacher. With an existing system in place, albeit relatively small, it would be easier for the campus to upgrade to a more powerful setup.

If any students have suggestions, other options, or questions in mind concerning the station, please visit the SGA offices located inside the Lion's Den, Commons Building.