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## Lenawee teams up to prevent intoxicated drivers

Adrian drunken driving arrests are up, and vendor compliance rates are at 90 percent. The Lenawee Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, local servers, law enforcement and other local groups seek to improve those areas.

Lenawee County residents are in the midst of the holiday season and that means celebrations, parties and for some this involves drinking alcohol.

Many people are responsible, but others are not.

Knowing this, some in the county have worked to raise their awareness so they can help ensure a safe and fun environment during the holidays.

### Drunken driving by the numbers

According to Lenawee Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition coordinator Leigh Jameson-Heise, between October of 2014 to February 2015 the state of Michigan saw its highest total number of crashes, including many that were alcohol-related.

In 2013, according to numbers for the state from michigantrafficcrashfacts.org, in 29.9 percent of the total crashes, the driver of the vehicle had been drinking alcohol.

Earlier this month, the Michigan State Police announced the results of preliminary reports that indicated eight people lost their lives in eight separate traffic crashes during the 2015 Thanksgiving holiday weekend. In comparison, MSP said six people died in six traffic crashes during the 2014 Thanksgiving holiday weekend.

Data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration states there is a 35 percent daily increase for alcohol-related fatal crashes during Christmas and almost a 50 percent increase during the New Year's holiday.

Locally, some police departments see an increase in drunken driving during the holidays, and throughout the year.

Adrian Police Chief Vince Emrick said statistically, they had an increase in drunken driving arrests in the last year.

In 2014, the Adrian Police Department recorded 90 arrests for operating while intoxicated, four operating while under the influence of drugs arrest, and six operating while intoxicated enhanced arrests in which blood-alcohol content is recorded higher than .17. Emrick said that among those, in November and December there were 11 drunken driving arrests, one driving under the influence of drugs arrest and one enhanced drunken driving arrest.

According to Heise, Lenawee ranked 57th — out of 83 counties — in alcohol-involved fatal crash rates in 2014.

### Law enforcement and business work together

Heise said in Lenawee County there has been a push for more partnerships with businesses to better address issues related to drinking and drunken driving. She added the average rate of vendor compliance with liquor laws in Lenawee County is 90 percent.

For her, Heise said taking on these issues starts in many cases with those who serve alcohol at bars and restaurants.

“Part of that success we attribute to responsible alcohol servers,” she said about vendor compliance. “Also contributing to this safety record is that the Lenawee Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition partners with the Lenawee Sheriff's Office to provide 170 liquor licensed vendors with a personal visit to deliver and discuss safe alcohol sales and service education and resources.”

Heise said awareness is important for servers because they risk personal civil and criminal liability if they fail to take reasonable efforts to refuse sales to



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Bartender Desiree McKeowen pours a beer at Sauce Italian Grill & Pub in Adrian.

minors and to visibly impaired adults.

Sauce Italian Grill and Pub in downtown Adrian is one such business taking public health and safety seriously during the holidays. Heise said before the Thanksgiving holiday Sauce owners Kim and Dave Horstman went above and beyond the legal requirements of liquor licensed establishments and completed a training program to help them and their staff better ensure a fun, yet safe environment.

Heise said Sauce had a collective 18 waiters and waitresses, bartenders and hosts trained in responsible alcohol standards established by the Michigan Liquor Control Commission Training for Intervention Procedures, or TIPS. This course is offered at cost by the Lenawee Substance Abuse Prevention Coalition, a program of Community Action Agency.

Servers undertook a three-hour curriculum, then were tested for certification.

Heise said education points clarified behavioral cues of intoxication, variables associated with the rate of customer intoxication, basic blood-alcohol content information and proper techniques for checking age identification documents. The servers engaged in role play to enhance their understanding through practice with the trainees posing as customers showing clues of intoxication, to which the partner server responded modeling effective techniques.

“It’s refreshing to have a restaurant exceed the minimum legal requirement because they care about the community,” Heise said. “The prevention coalition invests in this strategy because we believe that the servers of alcohol have direct control over youth access to alcohol and are in a position to prevent alcohol related injuries when they take this time to review the laws and make a plan to serve safely.”

Dave Horstman said doing this training was just another way for them to work toward being a better community partner.

“I had the entire front of house staff go through the TIPS course because Kim and I believe you have to continually train and educate staff to be successful,” Horstman said. “We are committed to providing first class service to our customers and the community.”

Horstman said the staff response was very positive.

“Awareness and prevention training is critical when you have staff that serve alcohol,” Horstman said.

Heise said more than 100 servers across Lenawee County completed the training from Michigan Speedway, Zu-Lilys, and Skips Pub to WOW Wingery and Café, Salsaria’s, Fiesta Ranchera, Grasshopper, Embers, CoCo Nuts, Weston Bar and Grill, the Crowell Opera House, Captain Chuck’s Sand Bar & Grill, Jerry’s Restaurant & Pub, Bullpen Sports Pub, Race Track Inn and Highland Beach Inn.

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## Why this matters

The holiday season is a time for parties, celebration and sometimes stress. This environment can lead to an increase in the number of people who drink alcohol and drive, which then increases the chances of injuries or death.

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