

# The Innocent Die in Auto Mishaps

Editor's note: This Fourth of July weekend will again find our highways crowded with motorists. Some of these drivers will be unlicensed. Some will be too old to handle an emergency situation. We had sent for a cutting torch to extricate the victims. It was then I noticed that your son was still alive. He was breathing slowly and apparently had not been killed. We had sent for a cutting torch to extricate the victims. It was then I noticed that your son was still alive. He was breathing slowly and apparently had not been killed.

## Montana Prevention Coalition Communication Post

BOYD ANDREW  
MANAGEMENT SERVICES

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### *"Back Where it All Began" - Sara Mahoney, Prevention, Mental Health Center, Billings, MT*

Many of us in the field remember how we got into prevention in the first place. For some, it was right opportunity at the right time. For others, we can trace it directly back to an event, a passion or a person. For me, that person, was my father. Growing up, I always wondered why my dad walked with a slight limp. When we went swimming (that's the only time farmers wear shorts), I would see the deep scars on his leg. I don't remember how old I was when he told me the limp and scars were the result of a car wreck he was in when he was only fifteen. That's all he said. But when he decided I was old enough to fully comprehend the events of March 23, 1970, he showed me the telling items tucked away in an old envelope. There were pictures of two 1960's era vehicles with severe front end damage and a yellow, tattered newspaper clipping.

My dad was hit by a drunk driver, just 8 miles from his home, on Highway 310 north of Bridger. He was the driver of the red and white pickup with his best friend by his side. They were on their way to my dad's house to work with the 4-H pigs they were taking to market the next morning. A drunk driver hit them head on. My dad suffered a concussion, facial lacerations and fractures, and a shattered right leg. His friend Marc was ejected and killed. Marc's dad was the local highway patrolman, Warren Meade, who soon thereafter responded to the crash.

If that isn't enough to give you chills, my father owes his life to a Good Samaritan named Dr. Ray Christensen of Powell, Wyoming. He was heading south behind the drunk driver and came upon the crash within seconds. He gave my dad morphine and helped place him into the "ambulance" for the 50 mile drive to Billings. Back then the "ambulance" was a station wagon with a driver. That's it. In the newspaper clipping, the good doctor recounts the events of that evening in an editorial addressed to the parents of Marc Meade. The article appeared in the Billings Gazette and ran a few months later, right before the Fourth of July holiday.

The beginning of the article doesn't sound as if it was written in 1970. If I didn't know better, I would say it could have been written last week. It opens as follows:

**"Editor's Note: The Fourth of July weekend will again find our highways crowded with motorists. Some of these drivers will be unlicensed. Some will be too old to handle emergency situations. Many will be speeding. Too many will be drunk. As a result, many will die, including many innocents. The letter below tells of the death of an innocent youth. It was written to Mr. and Mrs. Warren Meade of Bridger, after their son Marc died in a collision last March. Dr. Ray Christensen, who wrote the letter, believes more is needed than safety devices to cut the appalling road toll."**

Dr. Christensen's letter is graphic and long. Too long for me to include here, but it describes night's horrible events in grueling detail. Having been an EMT myself, I can say that DUI crashes are still just as horrible as Dr. Christensen describes in spite of all the technological advances we have in automobile safety. It's hard to read his description knowing he was talking about my dad, who was hurting, scared and suddenly in a world that no longer contained his best friend.

***(Continued on page 3)***



# Phillips County News

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## PC Coalition for Healthy Choices meets in Malta

By Mark Hebert  
Editor



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January 20, 2016

Last Wednesday in Malta, about a dozen people joined Carol Smith and Sonia Young in the basement of the Phillips County Coalition for Healthy Choices building to discuss the organization's newest grant and to get an update on the what the group has been up to over the past few months.

The Partners for Success Grant, which provides \$281,150 over the next five years, allows the Coalition for Healthy Choices to focus on underage drinking, drinking and driving -- target people ages 12-to-20 -- and prescription drug abuse and misuse in people ages 12-to-25.

Some of the statistical highlights of the 2014 Montana Prevention Needs Assessment Survey in Phillips County included binge drinking by minors, drinking and driving by minors and lifetime use.

"In most of those categories, you will find that we are higher than the state average," said Smith. "Even though we have been addressing this for 12-years, and our figures have come down some, we still qualify to get this grant."

The survey was conducted in the spring of 2014 with area school's students in grades 8, 10 and 12 as well as a voluntary option for students in grades 7,9 and 11 to participate as well.. The survey was designed to assess adolescent substance abuse, anti-social behavior and the risk and protective factors that predict these adolescent problems and behaviors. The total number of students who participated in the 2014 survey in Phillips County was 96.

Of the pages of statistics provided in the survey, Smith pointed out that eighth grade students in Phillips County at the time of the survey states that in their lifetime, 41.7-percent of them have had more than a few sips of alcohol and tenth grade students who have more than a sip are 61.8-percent (the state averages are 27.8 and 52.1, respectively.)

The efforts to curb these behaviors in addressed in the survey, the Coalition of Healthy Choices -- following guidelines presented by the Center for Substance Abuse Prevention -- uses six strategies which are the dissemination of information, prevention education, a community-based process, environmental approaches and offering alternative activities to county's youth.

Young gave several examples of how the last of those approaches -- alternative activities -- have been used and have been successful in Phillips County lately.

"I hold weekly meetings at the high school and," said Young. "We are the biggest high school extra circular club there is right now... we have over 30 members and just added two new ones."

Young said the group meets in the Malta High School cafeteria during study hall as well as the Healthy Choices building once a month where the groups discusses and plans alcohol, drug and tobacco prevention activities.

*(continued on page 3)*

Many thanks to Mark Hebert, Editor of the Phillips County News, for permission to reprint his article.

### (Back Where it All Begins, continued from page 1)

The end of the letter is probably the most important. Here, Dr. Christensen asks; "How do we prevent this from happening again?" Here we are, 46 years later, trying to accomplish the exact same thing.

**As a physician, I have been called to the scene of many accidents and have yet to become immune to their horror and tragedy. Too many people are losing their lives as a result of car accidents which should not have happened. This was no exception. Your son and his friend were driving as they should, yet your son is dead. His life was ended before he even had a good chance to fulfill any of your hopes and dreams for him or to experience the joys of life for himself. What can be done to prevent further accidents of this sort? We can build safer and stronger cars, we can pass auto inspection laws, and we can construct wider, safer highways. We have done all of this and injuries and deaths continue to rise. I believe we must pass stricter laws regulating drivers. One such law would be implied consent. Driving is a privilege, but with this privilege comes responsibility. I disagree with those who argue that driving is a right and that implied consent would infringe upon that right. The strict FAA regulations for pilots are more than justified. I feel that I have the right, while exercising my driving privilege to demand that every other driver be safe, sober, and have full control of their car at all times, and I expect the same of myself. Until we take away the driving privileges of those who drink and drive, those who take drugs and drive, those who are too old to perceive the dangers of driving and are too infirm to react when necessary for safety, as well as those reckless few who seem to think the highway is for them alone, we will continue to have more deaths. I write this letter to sympathize with you over the loss of your young son. He was only a few years older than my oldest son and I know what a tragic loss this is to you. I also encourage you to be a strict highway patrolman. If you find a driver who is not driving with regard for others, who abuse the privilege of driving, then let's take away (their) license before he kills someone. I am frightened that the next innocent victim might be me or a victim of my family. If enough of us frightened citizens get (involved) and elect conscientious legislators who have the courage to formulate strict and safe driving law, and if our courts will uphold these laws, then our highways will be safer for us all. Sincerely yours, Ray K. Christensen, M.D.**

This article not only has personal meaning, but it somewhat amazes me that even after all this time, here we are fighting the same battle that Dr. Christensen wrote so passionately about many years ago. Look at all the prevention strategies that he mentions, such as policy changes and enforcement. He talks about many things that MDT Director Tooley is working on today such as road engineering, vehicle safety (the installation of seatbelts) and look how far our emergency services in the state have come along, yet like everything else, we could do better.

I share this with my fellow prevention specialist to encourage you. You really are working to make a difference. We have come so far since my dad was a teenager, yet we have a long way to go. You have a part in that. And thankfully, we have data, statistics, coalitions, and evidence based prevention strategies to help us keep moving forward. Back then, the state didn't have prevention specialists, logic models and DUI Task Forces. Engineering has come a long way. We do have safer cars and wider roads with roundabouts and stronger DUI laws. But we are still fighting the DUI and alcohol "culture" that is in Montana.

There are some days when I don't know if I am making a difference. Days that I feel like a glorified secretary for the police department. Days when people roll their eyes and don't take me seriously when I talk to them about Dram Shop/ Civil Liability. It can almost get depressing. I was feeling like that recently and I know we all have those days. Then it happened. While cleaning out my safe at home, I came across the envelope my dad gave me when I first started working in prevention. I re-read it for what was probably the 100<sup>th</sup> time, and through the tears, I realized I am exactly where I need to be, doing the job I need to be doing, because we do and will make a difference.

### Phillips County News continued from page 2

"They had a good time," she said. "They played Xbox, did karaoke, watched movies, had food, played games and just had fun."

Last year, Young took a group of students to Capitol Hill in Helena to meet with local representatives and to see how laws are created. She said while there, the students were able to talk with Mike Lange, of Malta and the HD 33 State Representative, and Lang made an admission to the youths.

"He said, 'I have to be honest with you guys, I do chew tobacco'," Young recalled. "He then pledged to quit using tobacco. They educated him on some things and he educated them on the legislative procedures so it was a win-win situation."

To obtain a copy of the entire 2014 Montana Prevention Needs Assessment Survey for Phillips County, people are encourage to contact Smith at her office phone, 654-2378, on her cell at 390-4032 or through email at lovely@ttc-cmc.net.

## District II's Coordinated Public Awareness Campaign

District II Prevention Specialist **Melissa Kostelecky** and her strategy team decided a simple mailer to parents was an ideal strategy to generate community engagement and address underage drinking in their community. With a little bit of digging, knowing that resources are out there at the ready, they found a good fit at [www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking](http://www.samhsa.gov/underage-drinking).

They chose the “*talk they hear you*” plain-spoken and easy to remember parental skills tips with a positive sub text. Figuring nobody wanted to fuss around with envelopes on either end, they went with a post card. Due to the solid relationship all District II preventionists have with their local schools, they slapped a stamp on all those jimmies and handed them over to the school’s staff who utilized their mailing lists to send it out to parents.

These postcards were such a hit that preventionists in surrounding communities brought the idea to their people and pretty soon virtually the whole north eastern corner of the state from Malta to Glendive was blanketed with prevention postcards. PFS paid for the printing and postage, teamwork and collaboration out there did the rest. Billboards, newspaper ads, advertisements on benches like the one Forrest Gump sat on (since who can forget that unyielding devotion and persistence pays off in the end) and banners compliment these postcards in each community.

Small talks and baby steps, we’ll get there.



### 1 Show you disapprove of underage drinking.

Over 80% of young people ages 10-18 say their parents are the leading influence on their decision to drink or not drink. So they really are listening, and it's important that you send a clear and strong message.

### 2 Show you care about your child's happiness and well-being.

Young people are more likely to listen when they know you're on their side. Try to reinforce why you don't want your child to drink—not just because you say so, but because you want your child to be happy and safe. The conversation will go a lot better if you're working with, and not against, your child.

### 3 Show you're a good source of information about alcohol.

You want your child to be making informed decisions about drinking, with reliable information about its dangers. You don't want your child to be learning about alcohol from friends, the internet, or the media—you want to establish yourself as a trustworthy source of information.

### 4 Show you're paying attention and you'll notice if your child drinks.

You want to show you're keeping an eye on your child, because young people are more likely to drink if they think no one will notice. There are many subtle ways to do this without prying.

### 5 Build your child's skills and strategies for avoiding underage drinking.

Even if your child doesn't want to drink, peer pressure is a powerful thing. It could be tempting to drink just to avoid looking uncool. To prepare your child to resist peer pressure, you'll need to build skills and practice them.

**Keep it low-key.  
Don't worry, you don't have to get  
everything across in one talk.  
Many small talks are better.**

**Peg sends me her vacation photos to help break up the monotony of slogging through your invoices. Thanks Peg!**

