



Waunakee Rotary Club

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Wisconsin has the worst rate of binge and chronic drinking in the country, and County Executive Kathleen is looking for ways to change the culture in Dane County.

Kathleen spoke of the research she is embarking upon at the Waunakee Rotary Club meeting at June 12. Citing statistics, she noted that Wisconsin has the most arrests for operating while under the influence and in 2006, the highest percentage of alcohol-related crashes. Last year, 300 people were killed in alcohol-related crashes and 5,700 were injured. In Dane County alone, 3,000 individuals were booked on drunk driving charges.

Many of these are repeat offenders. Falk said in just a five-day stretch recently, Dane County deputies arrested a Stoughton man for his sixth OWI, then the next night a Madison man for his fifth OWI. The following night, a squad car was rear-ended by a drunk driver. That same night, deputies picked up a man in Windsor for his fifth drunk driving offense.

Wisconsin is not normal, Falk said. Nearly 50 percent of high school students drink here, more than in any other state.

These are not just public safety statistics. There are also health risks involved.

The drinking also contributes to domestic violence and sexual assaults, Falk said. One of every four children are exposed to alcohol abuse in the family.

In Dane County, \$60 million in tax dollars is spent each year to operate the jail. Nearly half of the inmates are there for drunk driving, while many others there for domestic violence or assault or battery were under the influence of alcohol.

Dane County spends \$8 million

on treatment programs to break that cycle.

Many of those serving time in the jails will re-offend because of their addiction, she said.

Kathleen said she is trying to figure out how to do more with the county's tax dollars to stem the drinking problem.

"It's not about stopping drinking to celebrate; it's about stopping the celebration of drinking," she said.

Kathleen said her own father was an alcoholic and died at the age of 52.

Changing the drinking culture in Dane County won't be easy, she said.

"I know how hard it is," Kathleen said. "I also know it's not impossible."

Right now she is researching the efforts of other states that are working effectively to reduce alcohol-related problems. She plans to come back to the community with a set of steps to take.

"We need to start changing the thinking that we are normal," Kathleen said.

She noted that efforts to reduce smoking have been effective.

"We can change these norms because we are the norms," she said.

Other news:

•Following Pat Durden's lead from last week, Phil Willems also contributed \$100 toward the Polio Plus effort to eradicate polio worldwide. The Gates Foundation will provide up to a \$100 million match.

•Phil said Team Leaders are needed to go to India Feb. 8-9 for a group exchange. Others will be asked to host Indian group exchange visitors in the future.

•Jeremiah Gollon said the Service Club Olympics is having a hard time getting clubs to sign up. Attendance

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Calendar of Events:

- Steak Fry, 6 p.m. cocktails, 7 p.m. dinner, June 24 at Rex's Innkeeper.
- Service Club Olympics, July 21-22
- Waunafest, July 24-27

has dropped significantly since Larry Felsheim left Rotary, and the event may not even survive. He's looking to get more involvement in the July 21-22 event.

Guests: Kelssey Baybe, guest of Shelley Moffatt.

Birthdays: June 20, David May.

Anniversaries: June 23, Frank and Joann Bucaida; June 25, Shelley Moffatt and Tom Fendrick.

Prayers: June 19, Pat Durden; June 26, Susan Vergeront; July 3, Leonard Allen.

Programs: June 19, Dan Muxfeld, Dean Foundation; June 26, Kathyne Auerback, Madison Environmental Group; July 3, Club Assembly.

Greeters: June 19, Connie Blau and Jim Brussell; June 26, Jonny Buroker and James Chancellor; July 3, Scott Cochems and John Cullen.

Make up meetings online

It's easy to make up a meeting on the Internet. The site is www.rotaryeclubone.org. Print out the form and give it to Phil Willems, the club secretary.