

April 2010

## **Wisconsin's 'Absolute Sobriety Law' means not a drop of alcohol for drivers under age 21**

As warmer weather arrives, young people with a winter's worth of pent-up energy will be out in force during this upcoming season of proms, graduation parties, and outdoor activities.

In their quest for springtime fun, young drivers may be tempted to get behind the wheel after drinking. However, they must resist this temptation because Wisconsin law requires drivers under the age of 21 to maintain absolute sobriety- not even a drop of alcohol allowed-when operating a motor vehicle.

Drivers under age 21 who violate the Absolute Sobriety Law will face a fine of \$389.50, have 4 demerit points assessed on their driver's license, and have their license suspended for three months. If a passenger under the age of 16 is in the vehicle, violators will face a fine of \$641.50, have 4 demerit points assessed on their driver's license, and have their license suspended for six months.

Springtime fun and celebrations can quickly turn to tragedies when young people drink and drive. Driving skills at any age are easily impaired with just a small amount of alcohol. But young and inexperienced drivers are much more prone to fatal and serious injury crashes after drinking. In Wisconsin, traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for young people. And as they begin the countdown to the end of the school year, we don't want to lose them because of a disastrous decision, like drinking and driving.

The Eau Claire Sheriff's Office has received several traffic safety grants related to enforcement of OWI/Absolute Sobriety laws, as well as Speed and Aggressive Driving. Additional patrols will be conducted at high activity times and dates to detect, as well as attempt to prevent and deter, these dangerous driving behaviors.