

SBM SOUTH BRUNSWICK MAGAZINE

Life in Southern Brunswick County, NC

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From Brunswick to Bali

**Catch a
Rising Star**
Logan Murrell

**Brunswick
County**
Gets MADD

**Southport
Says Goodbye**
to Randy Jones



Meet your neighbors:

- Ron Watts of Sunset Properties
- Daniel Beasley of Jumpin' Java

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Brunswick County Gets MADD

STORY BY BILLY JASON FRYE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KEITH KETCHUM



As a newspaper reporter and editor, Stacey Manning was all too familiar with the dangers and tragedies associated with drunk driving. From wreck scenes to courtrooms to interviews with grieving families, she saw the devastating effects of drunk driving from a safe distance. Then, in 2006, she received a phone call she never expected. Her mother had been killed in an wreck with an intoxicated driver.



Left: Stacey Manning is the founder of the new Brunswick County Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). Above: ATMC recently taped a segment on the new Brunswick County MADD organization. Featured on the segment were host Rex Gore, District Attorney for Brunswick, Bladen and Columbus counties; Craig Lloyd, Executive Director of North Carolina MADD; and Debra Hollis, MADD Volunteer.

Flash forward three years later and Manning was working as managing editor at *The Brunswick Beacon*, assigning and editing story after story involving drunk driving arrests, fatalities, DWI multiple offenders, families torn apart by the senselessness of it all. It became too much. The loss of her mother, the stories that kept showing up in her newspaper, the startling drunk-driving statistics in her new home county could only add up to one thing: action. In December 2009 Manning started the Brunswick County Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD).

"I don't want anyone else to go through what I went through," Manning says of her motivation for starting the organization.

By heading up Brunswick County's MADD, Manning is working to make MADD's statement of purpose a reality in her new home: "To aid the victims of crimes performed by individuals driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, to aid the families of such victims and to increase public awareness of the problem of drinking and drugged driving."

One of the ways Manning and MADD are working to realize this mission is by holding monthly meetings aimed at helping the victims and families affected by drunk driving. The meetings provide empathetic listening and support, as well as guidance through the criminal justice system and assistance with referrals to agencies that can offer additional support.

According to Manning, community support for MADD has been tremendous. The Aggressive Criminal Enforcement (ACE) team, represented by Sheriff John Ingram — which enforces driving laws through DWI checkpoints and the like — has come to every meeting. District Attorney Rex Gore and Sarah Garner, an NC MADD Hero for her work with the DWI Court in Brunswick County, provide legal help to the fledgling organization. Other community agencies such as

Drunk-Driving Statistics

- Brunswick County is 3rd in the state for alcohol fatalities, and North Carolina ranks 7th in the nation for alcohol-related traffic deaths.
- In 2008 there were 115 alcohol-related crashes in Brunswick County. The top two demographics for drunk drivers are white males ages 24 to 35 and white females ages 35 to 54.
- According to MADD, three in ten Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related crash in their lives.
- According to the national average, a drunk driver kills someone every 45 minutes.
- On average, a drunk-driving offender has driven drunk 87 times prior to being arrested.
- Alcohol kills more young people than all other illicit drugs combined.

churches, businesses and outreach organizations have also been helpful.

"We are still trying to get off the ground," says Manning. Manning is having monthly meetings in floating locations like churches and businesses that have opened their doors until a permanent location can be found. "We're taking it slowly, making sure we have a solid foundation so we can make a real impact," she says.

Another goal of MADD Brunswick County is to educate the public on the dangers of drunk driving. They are currently in the planning stages for a variety of programs including working with local high school students to prevent underage drinking. Plans are also in the works for community awareness programs that target Brunswick County's top two drunk-driving demographic groups — males ages 24 to 35 and females ages 35 to 54.

The loss of her mother, PJ Summitt, in 2006 was devastating to Manning, who had left her hometown of Bardstown, Kentucky, for a cross-country trip and was in Canada when she received the call that her mother had been killed in a drunk-driving wreck. Summitt was on her way to work when a 21-year-old student who had been awake for 24 hours and had been drinking, hit her head-on and killed her instantly. Because Summitt was a single mother, the loss was felt even more intensely by Manning.

"In addition to dealing with the grief, all the responsibilities fell to me," Manning says. "I didn't know how to settle an estate or where to turn for support after something like this."

After struggling with the pain of losing a loved one, Manning woke up one morning with a different emotion: anger. "I woke up mad," she says. "It didn't make sense. Why should my mother be gone after something so senseless? It wasn't fair." The anger stayed with her and became a stumbling block. And then she had another revelation. "I had to move past the hurt and anger because it was unproductive," Manning says.

Manning found that working hard at a cause close to her heart has been therapeutic in many ways. Helping others cope with the aftermath of drunk driving and working to prevent future tragedy has helped her find peace in her life. Manning's commitment to this important cause and her countless hours

of effort in getting MADD Brunswick County up and running is a testament to her determination to make her community a safer place.

For more information on Brunswick County MADD and to find out meeting times and locations, contact Stacey Manning at maddbcnc@gmail.com or call her at (910) 754-6890. You can also find MADD on Facebook by searching for MADD Brunswick County. More information on MADD and its programs, statistics and services is available at www.madd.org. 🌐



Who is MADD? MADD is not just for mothers. MADD members are anyone whose life has been affected by drunk driving.