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DUI Taskforce Works to Strengthen Laws and Save Lives

Labor Day weekend celebrations bring the increased risk of individuals driving under the influence (DUI). The Honorable Dorothy Brown, Clerk of the Circuit Court of Cook County, realizes the danger that alcohol-impaired drivers impose on others and is currently working with members of the Tina Ball Memorial DUI Taskforce to strengthen DUI laws that will make driving in Cook County safer.

“Drunk driving kills approximately 600 people a year in Illinois. The taskforce members and I recognize the seriousness of driving under the influence,” said Clerk Brown. “We are working on our vision of better protection of citizens by helping to keep intoxicated motorists off our streets.”

The Tina Ball Memorial DUI Taskforce, named in honor of Mrs. Tina Ball, a construction worker who was struck and killed in a work zone on Interstate 57 by a drunken driver in 2003, is comprised of representatives of several agencies and organizations that deal with the issue of drunk driving. During the inaugural meeting held in May 2004, the taskforce established the following subcommittees: Changes to the Law, Community Outreach to DUI Offenders, DUI Offender Registry, Not Guilty Statistics and Border States. A few issues being addressed by subcommittees include a review of current DUI laws, research of the DUI registry and the consideration of establishing stiffer penalties for offenders.

On August 4, 2004, the DUI team met and discussed several ways to significantly curb the disastrous effects of drunken driving in Cook County. The team targeted four groups to stress DUI prevention: teenagers, unapprehended offenders, first-time offenders and recidivists. These groups would be targeted through public service announcements, magazine and newspaper advertisements, and speaker forums about the dangers of drunk driving. Teenagers may also be educated about drunk driving hazards by attending victim impact panels with an incentive of getting lower rates on their car insurance.

Additionally, the taskforce will examine DUI laws in Illinois' border states of Missouri, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Kentucky and Wisconsin. The team also discussed having wider distribution of “hot sheets,” a list of drivers with revoked and suspended licenses, which is currently received monthly by 500 police departments and other agencies. The taskforce would like to create a similar list of DUI offenders.

The next meeting of the Tina Ball Memorial DUI Taskforce will be held at the Daley Center on November 30, 2004 at 8:30 a.m., Room 1001.

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