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7/21/07-Tyler

Third DWI Related Accident In A Month

A five year old boy is dead Saturday, after police say his stepfather was driving drunk and ran a stop sign. It happened around 11:00 p.m. Friday at the intersection of West Gentry Parkway and Albertson Avenue in Tyler. Police arrested the stepfather, Jaime Patrescio, 24 of Tyler and charged him with intoxication manslaughter. This is the third DWI related accident in a month.

Four accidents, three deaths, and only one month, all involving driving under the influence of alcohol, and in one case even drugs.

"It's deplorable that our statistics are where they are, that people are still dying on roadways and being injured," says MADD Victim Services Specialist Melissa Granberry. Granberry says lately her job with Mothers Against Drunk Driving has been keeping her busy.

"The perception in our area and our community is that there's not a problem with alcohol," said Granberry. "We do have a problem. We need to wake up and realize that DWI, driving while impaired, whether it's alcohol, whether it's drugs, prescription pills, any of those things, we have a problem with it and we need to address it." On June 21, Melinda Jackson, 27 was arrested and charged with DWI after hitting a 15 year old boy and critically injuring him. She was released from jail the very same day. Friday afternoon, she was arrested again for allegedly causing a three car wreck while driving drunk.

"It's absolutely deplorable that Melinda Jackson has been involved in another incident where alcohol has been involved," said Granberry. "It's just unacceptable that she's been able to be put back on the roads and put the safety of the community basically in her hands." It's a situation that MADD says happens all too often.

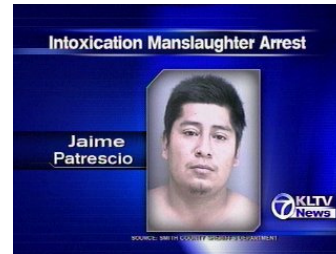
"There's got to be a time when we say enough is enough, and repeat offenders need to remain in jail until their case is taken through the judicial system," said Granberry. On June 23, Martha Mondragon, 31 and her unborn child were killed in a crash involving a drunk 15 year old illegal immigrant.

"It only takes that one time for someone to die," said Granberry. Police would not tell us if Jaime Patrescio, the stepfather involved in Friday night's accident, was legal or not, but either way, MADD says everyone needs to understand the dangers of drunk driving and do something about it.

"We need to look at the laws that we have, look at the loopholes and be able to close in on those them," said Granberry. That way no more innocent lives will be taken on our East Texas streets.

Melinda Jackson is still in jail Saturday for Friday's accident. Her bond's been set at \$35,000 for driving while intoxicated and two counts of possession of a controlled substance.

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