

Real Life Safety Heroes: Candy Lightner



With Mother's Day approaching, OHS coordinators might want to take a little time to recognize Candace Lynne "Candy" Lightner, the organizer and founding president of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD).

The Origins of MADD

In 1980, Cari Lightner, Candy's 13-year-old daughter, was walking down a street near her home in suburban California when she was fatally struck from behind by a car. The driver sped away but was later apprehended. It turned out that he was drunk when he hit Cari. To make matters worse, he had a history of drunk driving, including 3 prior DWI convictions. He had actually been released on bail from a hit-and-run arrest just 2 days earlier.

But despite all of this, the driver got off with just a 2-year sentence. Adding insult to injury, he was able to avoid prison by serving time in a halfway house and work camp. Candy Lightner was enraged and determined to do something to ensure that other parents wouldn't have to endure a similar ordeal. So, she created an organization to raise awareness about drunk driving and push for tougher laws to combat it.

Back in 1980, drunk driving wasn't seen as a serious safety hazard. Getting caught driving drunk was regarded as an embarrassment and a cause for teasing rather than an act

worthy of criminal punishment. But thanks in large part to the efforts of Ms. Lightner and MADD, public attitudes began to change. Her advocacy led to the passage of over 700 state and federal bills, including legislation raising the drinking age to 21.

Ms. Lightner remains active in the movement but has broken with MADD because in her view, the organization has become “neo-prohibitionist” and more interested in fighting drinking than drunk driving.

MADD Canada

Inspired by Lightner’s work, provincial grass roots anti-impaired driving movements began springing up in Canada in the early 1980’s led by victims and survivors. Those early pioneers included Sally Gribble, whose B.C. group received a Chapter charter from MADD U.S., Gladys Armstrong and Pat Baril (PAID in Alberta), Margaret Taylor (CAID in Manitoba), and a PRIDE (People to Reduce Impaired Driving Everywhere) organization in Ontario.

In 1989, PAID, CAID, and PRIDE initiated discussions with MADD U.S. resulting in the creation of MADD Canada. While it’s impossible to come up with a precise number, based on scientific formulas developed for the United States National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the efforts of MADD Canada and its predecessors are responsible for saving an [estimated](#) 43,247 lives in Canada between 1982 and 2014. Regrettably, 45,884 Canadians were killed in alcohol-related crashes in this same period.

By Glenn Demby