

# Dane County Traffic Safety Commission

## Co-Chairs

**Sgt. Matt Meyer**

Dane Co. Sheriff's Office  
(608) 284-6876

**Cheryl Wittke**

Safe Communities Madison-Dane Co.  
(608) 256-6713

## Members

AAA Wisconsin

American Family Children's  
Hospital / Safe Kids

Belleville Police Dept.

Blue Mounds Police Dept.

CESA 2 Driver's Education

Cottage Grove Police Dept.

Cross Plains Police Dept.

Dane Co. Court Commissioner

Dane Co. District Attorney's Office

Dane Co. EMS

Dane Co. Highway & Transportation

Dane Co. Sheriff's Office

DeForest Police Dept

DeForest Public Works

Fitchburg Police Dept.

Fitchburg Public Works

Greater Madison MPO

Madison Metro

Madison Municipal Court

Madison Police Dept.

Madison Traffic Engineering

Maple Bluff Police Dept.

Marshall Police Dept.

McFarland Police Dept.

Middleton Police Dept.

Monona Police Dept.

Mount Horeb Police Dept.

Oregon Police Dept.

Public Health Madison & Dane Co.

Safe Communities Madison-Dane Co.

Shorewood Hills Police Dept.

SSM Health

Stoughton Police Dept.

Sun Prairie Pedestrian Task Force

Sun Prairie Police Dept.

Sun Prairie Public Services

UW Extension

UW Health Trauma Centers

UW-Madison Police Dept.

UW TOPS Laboratory

UW Transportation Services

Verona Police Dept.

Waunakee Police Dept.

WI Alcohol Policy Project

WI Bike Federation

WI Dept. of Transportation/  
Bureau of Traffic Safety

WI State Laboratory of Hygiene

WI State Patrol

**October 23, 2023**

**For Immediate Release (See interview/photo opportunities, graphics, page 3)**

**For more information, contact: Cheryl Wittke, (608) 256-6713**

**Executive Director, Safe Communities of Madison - Dane County**

## African Americans, Latinos at greater risk in traffic crashes

It's a Dane County fact. African Americans and Latinos are at greater risk of dying or suffering serious injuries in traffic crashes.

To improve driver and pedestrian safety in communities of color, the Dane County Traffic Safety Commission (TSC), in partnership with Safe Communities of Madison-Dane

County, has begun a new yard sign campaign reminding all motorists to drive more safely in neighborhoods. Cropping up around Madison and surrounding communities this week are yard signs depicting a young child, on one side cautioning drivers, "I Am Loved: Please Slow Down" and on the other side, "You Are Loved! Please Buckle Up." Signs are in both English and Spanish. Madison artist, author, educator, and non-profit leader Lilada Gee created the sign graphic.

Cheryl Wittke, TSC co-chair and executive director of Safe Communities of Madison-Dane County, said that in the most recent quarter monitored by the Traffic Safety Commission, over half of traffic crash fatalities involved African Americans, Latinos or Asians.

"In 2023, we're seeing an acceleration of a trend we have found in recent years," she said. "In 2022, people of color accounted for 31% of all injuries and fatalities in the county, while representing 21.7% of the population." Wittke said these numbers include not just drivers but also passengers, bicyclists, or pedestrians struck by vehicles.

"Every crash has the potential of changing lives and families forever," said Itina Johnson, African American Opioid Coalition and Traffic Safety Project Coordinator with Safe Communities. "These signs are just one step we all can take to keep this issue in front of motorists. It's not just about people of color. These signs are good words of advice to keep everyone safer in and around our county roadways."

*(Continued next page)*



# Dane County Traffic Safety Commission

News Release Oct. 23, 2023- Page 2

*(Continued from page 1)*

Wittke said the signs are being introduced now for the added benefit of keeping children and families safer as an increased number of people walk neighborhoods at Halloween.

“Halloween nationally is one of the top three days for pedestrian injuries and fatalities,” Wittke said.

“The CDC estimates that children are four times more likely to be struck by a motor vehicle on Halloween than any other day of the year.”

Community organizations are helping distribute the yard signs. These include the Urban League, Boys and Girls Club of Dane County, Reach Dane, Common Wealth Development, African American Council of Churches, Catholic Multicultural Center, Madison Police Amigos en Azul, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, Inc. - Kappa Psi Omega Chapter, Northside Planning Council, Safe Kids Madison Area, Neighborhood Navigators of Sun Prairie, and Sun Prairie Police.

Teran Peterson, Neighborhood Navigators Program Manager for the City of Sun Prairie, said this sign program fits perfectly with their work. “We emphasize outreach activities targeted to community needs. Keeping our residents and neighborhoods safe is a major focus,” she said.

“We’re placing the signs in the yards of businesses, churches, private homes and apartment complexes,” Johnson said. “We’re working especially hard to get the signs out in neighborhoods frequented by people of color.”

TSC Member and AAA Wisconsin Director of Public Affairs Nick Jarmusz offered the following additional AAA top tips for safer neighborhood driving at Halloween:

- Designate a navigator. If you need to check a map, take pictures, or do anything that will take your attention off the road, pull over or delegate those tasks to a passenger.
- Remain seated and buckled. Everyone in the vehicle should remain seated and buckled at all times, even when parked on the side of the road.
- Drive at least 5 mph below the posted speed limit to give yourself extra time to react to children who might dart into the street.
- Watch for children walking on roadways and streets in dark costumes (harder to see at night).
- Look for children crossing the street. They may not be paying attention to traffic and cross the street mid-block or between parked cars.
- Carefully enter and exit driveways and alleys.
- Turn on your headlights to make your vehicle more visible.
- Broaden your scanning by looking for children left and right.

*(Continued next page)*

# Dane County Traffic Safety Commission

News Release Oct. 23, 2023 – page 3

(Continued from page 2)

For trick-or-treaters, AAA recommends:

- Be bright at night: wear light-colored clothing or costumes to improve visibility to motorists and others. If unavailable, use reflective tape on costumes and treat buckets.
- Wear disguises that don't obstruct vision. Avoid facemasks.
- Ensure any props are flexible and blunt-tipped to avoid injury.
- Carry a flashlight containing fresh batteries
- Stay on sidewalks and avoid walking in streets if possible (always walk facing traffic and stay as far to the left of the roadway as possible).
- Don't walk distracted. Save the social media updates for before or after you go trick-or-treating. Avoid checking your phone while walking or supervising children.

\* \* \* \* \*

The following individuals may be contacted directly for interviews or to arrange photo opportunities:

1. **Traffic Safety Commission, Crash Data:** Cheryl Wittke, Exec. Director, Safe Communities of Madison - Dane County and TSC co-chair. [cwittke@safercommunity.net](mailto:cwittke@safercommunity.net), (608) 256-6713.
2. **Yard Sign Campaign:** Itina Johnson, African American Opioid Coalition and Traffic Safety Project Coordinator, Safe Communities of Madison - Dane County, [ijohnson@safercommunity.net](mailto:ijohnson@safercommunity.net), (608) 441-3060.
3. **Sign Distribution in Sun Prairie:** Teran Peterson, Program Manager of Neighborhood Navigators and Community Health Workers, [tpeterson@cityofsunprairie.com](mailto:tpeterson@cityofsunprairie.com), (608) 216-5122.
4. **Signs displayed at African American Council of Churches members:** Rev. Dr. Marcus Allen, President of African American Council of Churches of Dane County and Pastor at Mount Zion Baptist Church, [1mtzlife@mtzlife.com](mailto:1mtzlife@mtzlife.com), (608) 255-5270.
5. **Spanish signs displayed (Latino/a installing sign for photo):** Steve Maurice, Director, Catholic Multicultural Center, [steve@cmcmadison.org](mailto:steve@cmcmadison.org), (608) 441-3248.
6. **Safety tips for drivers and trick-or-treaters at Halloween:** Nick Jarmusz, Director of Public Affairs, AAA Wisconsin, [njjarmusz@acg.aaa.com](mailto:njjarmusz@acg.aaa.com), (608) 556-4744.

