



**SAFE COMMUNITY COALITION  
OF MADISON & DANE COUNTY**

**SLOW DOWN YARD SIGN  
CAMPAIGN  
MAY 28 – JUNE 7, 2002**

**EVALUATION REPORT**

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# **SLOW DOWN YARD SIGN CAMPAIGN EVALUATION**

Safe Community Coalition 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Slow Down Yard Sign Campaign  
May 28 – June 7, 2002

## **WHO WAS INVOLVED?**

There were 34 area neighborhoods and 13 law enforcement agencies from across Dane County that participated. *See Appendix 1 for details.*

## **WHAT HAPPENED?**

Over 3000 “Slow Down Watch For Kids” yard signs were posted across Dane County. Neighborhoods and communities posted these yard signs and some also put up speed boards and organized pace cars. Law enforcement agencies also stepped up speed enforcement during the campaign.

## **ARE PEOPLE AWARE OF THE CAMPAIGN? DOES IT AFFECT THEIR DRIVING BEHAVIOR?**

Gene Kroupa and Associates conducted a random telephone survey of 804 Dane Co. residents (402 from city of Madison and 402 residents from other Dane county communities). The purpose was to assess the awareness of the yard signs and to measure (reported) behavior change as related to seeing these signs. *See Appendix 2 for Survey Questionnaire.*

The survey showed the following results: *Survey charts are shown in Appendix 3.*

- ❖ Large numbers of drivers recalled seeing the signs – 67% of Madison and Dane County residents recalled seeing the signs. (74% Madison residents and 60% Dane Co. residents)
  - Awareness of signs increased directly with age group (48% for 18-24 year olds to 72% for those 55 years and older)
  - Marrieds (71%) were more likely to have seen the signs than singles (59%).
  - Women (71%) were more likely than men (63%) to have seen the signs.
- ❖ While changing the color combination of the signs helps distinguish the current from the past campaign, either the blue with white or red with white combination works well.
- ❖ Over half the people (55%) recalled the “Slow Down – Watch for Kids” message line.
- ❖ The signs clearly influenced in a positive manner the reported behavior of a large proportion of drivers who saw them.
  - 78% drove more cautiously (81% Dane County residents, 76% Madison residents)
  - 74% became more aware of children in the area (74% Madison, 73% Dane Co.)
  - 67% reported reducing their speed in area of signs (68% Dane Co., 65% Madison)
    - Likelihood of reducing speed in sign and other areas, becoming more aware of children, and driving more cautiously was higher among women
  - 93% became familiar with the signs and what they meant (95% Dane Co., 91% Madison)
  - 93% felt good driving at the posted speed (94% Dane Co., 91% Madison)

## **DID DRIVERS ACTUALLY SLOW DOWN AS A RESULT OF THE SIGNS?**

Speed studies were conducted in some of the neighborhoods that participated in the Slow Down Yard Sign Campaign. In Madison, out of the 10 locations where speed studies took place, only 8 will be reported due to data collection problems (e.g. pre and post locations were different or yard signs were never put up). Speed studies also took place in Fitchburg, Cambridge and Black Earth. Please note that some of the pre-campaign speed study data was taken from previous years. *See Appendix 4A & 4B for Madison & Dane County speed study sites and results.*

There was a reduction in the number of vehicles driving over the speed limit (over 25 MPH) after the campaign as compared to before, according to a speed study at Saybrook Ave. (Greentree Neighborhood) – 83.2% VS 89.3%. However, in all other Madison locations, there was only a small reduction or none at all when comparing the before and after campaign results. Fitchburg, Cambridge and Black Earth also showed no change between before and after the campaign. It appears that the campaign does not have a sustained effect once the yard signs come down.

On the other hand, vehicles driving over the speed limit were dramatically reduced during the campaign as compared to after the signs came down, according to a speed study on Sherman Ave. (Tenney-Lapham neighborhood) – 73.6% during VS 92.0 % after. Unfortunately this was the only location where speed studies were conducted while the campaign was taking place. On Sherman Ave, although the campaign resulted in improvement, 73.6% of the vehicles driving over the speed limit is still not good.

It is not surprising to see the positive campaign results at Sherman Ave. when you consider the number of signs that were posted on both sides of the street for several blocks plus there was a speed awareness trailer displaying the speed on approaching vehicles and increased enforcement. In the locations where there were many signs posted on both sides of the street, it has more visual impact on the driver than a few signs scattered here and there on the block. There were many great efforts made by neighborhoods across Dane County that had huge visual impact. Some notable examples were University Hill Farms, Brans Addition at Park St., Nakoma, Greentree, Tenney-Lapham, Dudgeon-Monroe, Middleton, Fitchburg, and Black Earth with its green men. There were also several locations across the county that had speed boards and enforcement in conjunction with their yard signs. Unfortunately, we did not conduct any other speed studies during the campaign to compare the effect of those places with lots of signs versus those with only a few and those with and without increased enforcement.

Ongoing efforts are taking place in the Dudgeon-Monroe neighborhood to combat traffic safety problems. We cannot look at the effect of these ongoing efforts on Monroe St. at this point in time because no post activity speed studies have been done to date. However, we do know that speeding on that street is a huge problem. 95% of the vehicles are driving over the speed limit in the 2900 block of Monroe St. Hopefully, over time; this neighborhood will see an improvement as a result of their varied, continuous efforts.

## **CONCLUSION**

Overall, according to the evaluation, the Slow Down Yard Sign campaign seems positive because people do notice them and they do slow down when the signs are up. Especially when there are speed boards to show them their approaching speed. Neighborhoods working with law enforcement to address traffic safety problems have also been very positive. However, the problem with cars driving over the speed limit in our neighborhoods still exists. On the long term, perhaps a multifaceted approach that takes place throughout the year is needed.

*See Appendix 5 for photos of the 2002 Slow Down Yard Sign Campaign.*