December DWI Mobilization

The Owatonna Police Department will put drunk drivers on ice during the December increased DWI enforcement. Each year in Minnesota, more than 400 people are killed on the roads and one-third of those deaths are alcohol-related. There were 141 alcohol-related deaths in 2009, a record low. Annually more than 30,000 motorists are arrested for DWI. “We’ll have more officers on the roads, working more hours, all focused toward arresting drivers that are putting innocent lives at risk,” says Chief Keith Hiller. “Avoid the potentially deadly consequences of driving impaired and avoid the heavy cost, embarrassment and the shame of a DWI by planning for a safe and sober ride.”

Owatonna officers will combine DWI patrols with seat belt enforcement. Each year, 75% of drinking drivers killed are not belted. Chief Keith Hiller reminds Owatonna motorists to plan ahead for a safe ride home before celebrating: designate a sober driver, take a cab or public transportation, or spend the night at the location of the celebration.

Synthetic Marijuana

The days of Spice, K2, Yucatan Fire, Smoke, Skunk and Red X Dawn may be numbered. In fact, synthetic marijuana or “fake pot” needs to be off store shelves by December 24, 2010 to comply with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. The drug, which is legally available in convenience stores and tobacco shops is usually sold in potpourri or incense packaging with a small warning label indicating it is not for human consumption. Researchers believe “synthetic cannabinoids” are between three and 100 times more potent than THC, the active ingredient in marijuana. Users complain of elevated heart rates, confusion and nausea. An incident in Iowa resulted in hallucinations and suicide, and a 14-year-old Hastings teen went into a coma after using the drug. Representative Denny McNamara will introduce a bill during the 2011 legislative session that would classify the chemical as a Schedule 1 controlled substance and he expects little resistance from other lawmakers.

Winter Parking Ban

A special THANK YOU to the patrol division! We did a comparison of parking citations issued between 11/22/2010 – 11/28/2010 and 11/22/2009 – 11/28/2009. The patrol division issued “informational” flyers for two weeks prior to the winter parking ordinance taking effect and issued “warning” flyers the first week of the winter parking ban. When it comes to education and awareness, it appears the fruits of our labor did not go unnoticed. The OPD witnessed a 41.3% reduction in citations, with 143 issued in 2009 compared to only 84 being issued in 2010!