

# Celebrating 20 Years of Providing a Last Call **Safe Ride Home** in Marathon County!

## How It All Got Started

Back in 1993, Dean Schmalz, owner of Central Beer Distributors, along with Miller Brewing Company; the Marathon County Tavern League; local tavern owners, including Rod Fisher and Jim Treu; and area cab services partnered to establish Wisconsin's second Safe Ride voucher program (the first was in Dane County). The program reflected an emerging cultural shift in our state in which previous lax attitudes related to alcohol and driving were giving way to more realistic concerns for safety.

Miller Brewing Company contributed \$5,000 to kickstart the effort, and the program has grown dramatically over the years. Local TV and radio media have provided coverage, and various fundraisers and contributions have subsidized the effort. Today, local financial support is bolstered by funds from state sources.

## A Measure of Success

During the voucher system's first few years, annual ridership was counted in the hundreds. For example, 232 rides were provided in 1995. In 1999, that number nearly quadrupled to 887, at a cost of \$8,900 in cab fares.

As public awareness and tavern participation grew, the program expanded nearly tenfold — in 2011, a total of 8,234 rides were provided at a cost of more than \$69,000 in fares.

The true success of the Last Call Safe Ride Home voucher program remains hidden, and can only be imagined in the number of lives saved and injuries prevented for citizens of Marathon County. We can only say a hearty "Thank you!" to all who helped make this happen.

## Further Down the Road

Surely, the impact of Marathon County's ride voucher program is something to be thankful for and proud of. But, it is more important to continue to work together as a community to keep our roads and citizens safe from the dangers of alcohol-related driving. Our tavern owners, Tavern League, law enforcement, cab services, media, business and fellow citizens all have a stake in this important effort.

*Marathon County's Last Call Safe Ride Home —  
it's a fine example of what makes living here something special indeed!*



*Central Beer  
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