

# Beat The

## A Youth Program Races to

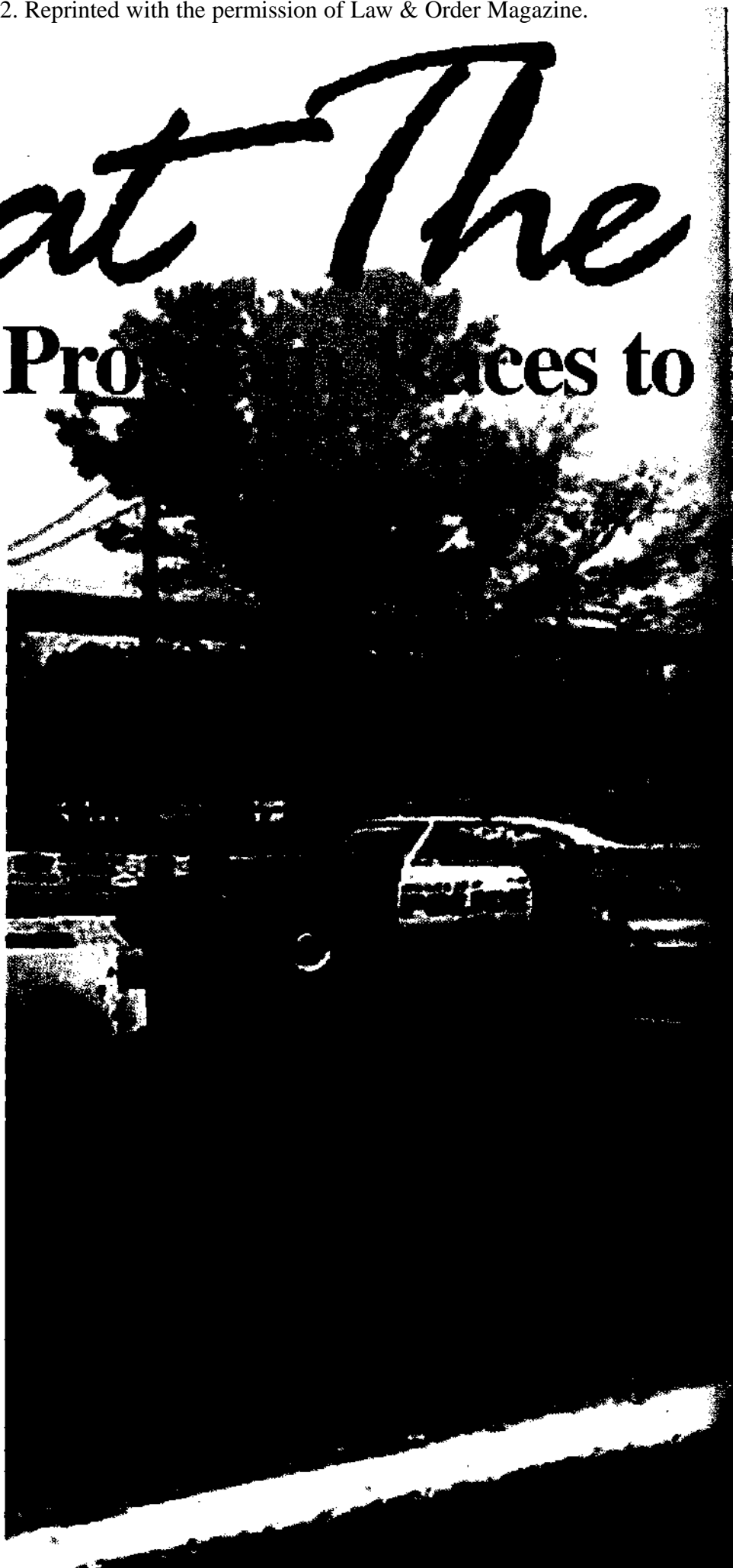
BY MAC SIBLEY

“Beat the Heat” is a Cops and Kids community policing program. Police officers in 30 states and two Canadian provinces use police marked drag racing cars to get the attention of the young people in their communities. The theme of the program is “racing for education.”

The program was designed to educate the young people of the communities about the problems of illegal drug and alcohol use, to educate everyone of the problems of alcohol or drug impaired driving, to promote a better understanding between the police and the communities they serve and to encourage everyone not to drag race in the street. It encourages young people to stay in school and off drugs and alcohol.

The handicap-style of drag racing is a sport in which all drivers can compete on an equal basis. The only requirement for success is your own ability to learn the technique, not the speed of the car. This hobby is one in which women can participate in direct competition with men.

With the advent of NHRA's new junior racing league, fans as young as eight years old are able to participate in drag racing. Physically impaired drivers are able to participate in this sport using their ability to drive and their competitive nature—they don't have to race in their own special class. They race and can beat anyone who shows up in the other lane. Beat the Heat also offers alternative



# Heat

## Keep Kids Off the Street



extra-curricular activity for youngsters who may not be interested in high school sports.

### **Taking the Kids to the Track**

The program originated in 1984 with the Jacksonville, FL, Sheriff's Department. Sgt. Don Robertson got a 1978 Chevrolet Malibu four door, an old patrol car from the department, and with the help of many sponsors was able to turn the car into a ten second quarter-mile drag car. The car was named "The Heat." He took the car to schools in the area and encouraged a generation of youngsters to go out to the track to race instead of racing in the street. He told them if they would go out to the track to race, the police would come out and race with them.

Don took "The Heat" out to Jax Raceway and raced with the kids. He and the promoters were able to supply t-shirts for the kids: if they won the race with the police car, the shirt read "I Beat The Heat at Jax Raceway"; those who lost the handicap drag race received a t-shirt that read "I Was Beat By The Heat at Jax Raceway." The program taught many young people they could go out to the track to race their cars instead of racing in the street.

### **The World Takes Notice**

In the 1990s Beat The Heat grew to a national, then international program. The program has received inquiries from England, Australia, Germany and several other countries where police agencies are interested in new ways to work with young people. In 1994 Beat The Heat



also won the prestigious CRIMINAL JUSTICE AWARD from the Texas Attorney General's Office for its work with young people in the Prevention Category.

In 1995, during the Beat The Heat Challenge at the Texas Motorplex, over 6,000 spectators were in the stands. This was the largest spectator crowd in the history of the Motorplex to attend a

regular Saturday night bracket race. Half of the spectators were young people.

In 1997, 1998 and 1999 the Program sponsored a series of challenges for officers all over the country to gather and display their programs and race the cars for the title of TOP COP. The last event at Gainesville Raceway in Florida was the WORLD FINALS where a national champion for the program was crowned. All the officers who participated in these

events volunteered to do so knowing there were no monetary prizes— they participated at their own expense to try to make a difference for the kids.

The members of the program contacted over 245,000 young people in 1995 to deliver the message. In 1996 over 300,000 kids participated. That number grew to well over 500,000 in 1997. In 1998, that number exceeded 700,000. In 1999, they finally exceeded the 1,000,000 mark in one year.

In 1999, Beat the Heat, Inc., associated itself with the National Street Car Association (NSCA), whose principles are closely aligned. NSCA provides a place for street racers to get off the street and on the track to race their cars. NSCA also provided a venue for Beat the Heat, Inc., to deliver its message to more people all over the country. NSCA had a Beat the Heat Class at every NSCA event in 1999. ESPN covered all the NSCA events and had 30 minute programs shown on national television— valuable publicity for the program.

The expansion of the program has produced some very impressive



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numbers. In 1999, members of Beat the Heat, Inc., participated in over 750 events in front of over 1.3 million young people. During 2000 they reported over 600 events and again contacted well over a million kids. However, less than ten percent of those events were drag races. All this is done without the expenditure of any tax dollars.

#### **Donating Time for Kids**

All the members and staff of Beat the Heat, Inc., are strictly volunteers; there are no salaried employees of the corporation and there is no tax funding supplied to the program. The national office has been able to keep administrative costs below two percent every year, which means the vast majority of the donations are spent working with kids. Funding is needed for pamphlets, pictures, trading cards, t-shirts, caps and any other items can be handed out to the kids to remind them of the message. All funds come from donations from sponsors and individual donors who desire to see the goals of the program met. Several of the officers have trading cards printed, which have proved to be great items to present to the kids to remind them about the principles of the program.

Membership in Beat the Heat, Inc., is not limited only to police officers. The organization also includes firefighters, paramedics, reserves and several civilian volunteers. All of these folks work with agencies to try to make a real difference for the young people of their communities.

The volunteer officers of the program drive over 300,000 miles each year to participate in all these events. They do not charge a fee for the appearances. Most of the time the organizations that really need help have no budget to supply any funding. It is the program's intention to keep working with the young people as long as possible and hope enough help is received from sponsors and donors to keep it going.

#### **The National Race**

Every year Beat the Heat, Inc., holds a national championship racing event where the cops battle with each other and crown a true racing champion of the program. The 2000 season saw the event take place at Beech Bend Raceway near Bowling



Green, KY. The area programs of the Nashville Metro Police and the Warren County Sheriffs Department hosted the event, including displays for the kids at Greenwood Mall in Bowling Green. Thousands of youngsters got the opportunity to get up close and personal with the cops at the mall. The race was scheduled to take place on the next day with qualifying late in the afternoon and compe-

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tition after dark. When the cops race each other they run emergency lights and sirens and put on a great show after dark.

The format of the event includes three classes of police competition. The cars are divided into two classes: PRO COP and MODIFIED COP. The PRO COP field is a qualified class that includes the 16 quickest cars to make passes. The MOD COP Class includes all of the rest of the Beat the Heat competitors. Motorcycles are not allowed to race with cars on the quarter-mile so they have their own class called MOTORCOP. All racing is done according to NHRA ET Handicap Eliminator Rules. The winners of the two car classes race each other at the end of the competition to determine the World Champ for the year. The

winner of the MOTORCOP Class is also declared a World Champ.

In the final rounds of the 2000 World Championships, Officer Clint Hillard of the Milan, TN, Police took the MOTORCOP Championship with his Suzuki over the reigning MOTORCOP World Champ Deputy Roger Legg of the Harris County, TX, Sheriffs Department and his Kawasaki.

The 2000 MOD COP Class came down to Sheriff Fred Jobe of the Custer County, CO, Sheriffs Department in his Camaro versus a former runner-up for the Beat the Heat World Championship, Officer Scott Phillips of the Roselle, IL, Police. Phillip's Olds police car took the win with a 10.719 second elapsed time.

The 2000 PRO COP Class came down to two Ohio cars: Clark County Deputy Ken Nichols and his 1968 Barracuda versus Highland County Reserve Rick Wilkin and his 1991 Camaro. Wilkin took the honors with a 9.160 second run. Wilkin also won the face off for the tide of 2000 Beat the Heat World Champion.

Of particular interest to members and fans, the TV Show *America's Most Wanted* sent a crew to tape some video so they can give the program a boost on national TV. Thanks to AMW for their assistance, this program should reach more kids and parents.

Visit Beat the Heat online at [www.beattheheatinc.org](http://www.beattheheatinc.org).

*Mac Sibley is the president of Beat The Heat, Inc., a non-profit corporation recognized as tax exempt by the State of Texas and the IRS under Section 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code. All donations are tax-deductible. For more information contact the National Office at (972) 723-2024.*