

Learning about DUI without the drinks

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MARPLE -- It wasn't the mangled Dodge Charger or the open casket so much that impressed Lydell Baynard, but a simulated drunken-driving session made the point loud and clear. "It's not as easy as you think it is," said Baynard about driving impaired. "If you're intoxicated, it's definitely a total difference. There are a lot of things you gotta look out for like the real big, slow delayed reaction in your mind."

The simulation, the demolished car and the casket were all a part of Delaware County Community College's "DUI Project Arrive Alive" Tuesday at the Academic Center. Students in a Teamwork course came up with the topic, raised money and organized the event to inform students about the effects of drunken driving.

"I feel like it's a really important issue, especially around this area," said Cat Gonzales, 21, who suggested doing the project around drunk driving. "We just wanted to (raise) awareness."

During the spring prom season, fatalities resulting from DUI typically increase. **The reaction of students who went through the simulated sessions Tuesday seemed to indicate a newfound understanding.**

"This definitely would lower the death toll of young teens and adults who drive, especially drunk driving," said Baynard, 22. "This is a really good program."

DCCC student Tameka Fothergill, 24, also took a drive in the simulator.

"I go out sometime, I have one drink and I usually think that 'Oh, that ain't gonna do nothing to me,'" Fothergill said, "but the first time you get (in the simulator) it's one drink and it still felt like you were kind of drunk.

"I think everybody should go in there and try, it would make them think about it," she said.

The event included demonstrations by emergency medical personnel, a film about teens and alcohol, and a presentation by a man with traumatic brain damage after being hit by a drunken driver. Lawyers and insurers were also available to talk about the financial impact of a drunken-driving offense.

"I could sit here and tell them it's bad, don't do it, but I think it means a lot more coming from their peers," said Marple Patrolman Greg DeSimone, standing at a display for the Marple Police Department. DeSimone noted that he has been on the scene of numerous drunken-driving accidents, and that most of them involve injuries.

Steven Fantini, who was in the fall Teamwork class that initiated the project and is now a student at Temple University, said he was pleasantly surprised at how receptive students were. **He witnessed one student take a friend to the simulator to illustrate the dangers of their drunk driving.**

"That was all the reaction I needed," Fantini said.

The Save A Life Tour simulator was provided by Kramer Entertainment Agency of Michigan.