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Simulator teaches drivers about the dangers of drinking

Machine makes visit to DMAAC on Save a Life Tour

By MEGHAN V. MALLOY REGISTER STAFF WRITER

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HOLLY MCQUEEN/REGISTER PHOTOS Cameron Claytor, 18, of Des Moines tries to avoid a bus and other potential hazards while testing out the drunken-driving simulator on DMAAC's Urban Campus on Wednesday. The simulator was on campus as part of the national Save a Life Tour.

Jessica Barrett jumps a curb, nearly hits a road sign, overcorrects her vehicle and is inches away from sideswiping another car.

"Oops," the 19-year-old said.

Luckily for Barrett, the vehicle she is recklessly driving is only a simulator.

The simulator is part of the Save a Life Tour, a nationwide drunken-driving prevention program that travels to hundreds of educational institutions and military bases a year.

"This makes me glad I never drink and drive," Barrett said as she climbed out of the Ford Taurus driver's seat.

Students seat themselves in a portion of a Taurus and try to navigate urban and rural terrain with a pretend maximum blood alcohol content level of .34.

Iowa's legal limit is .08.

Des Moines Police Sgt. Todd Dykstra said 939 people were arrested in Des Moines in 2006 for operating while intoxicated.

Dykstra said he was unsure whether the 939 arrests were higher than in previous years, but said the number could be contributed to a heightened presence of officers cracking down on intoxicated drivers.

"Most people don't know what can happen when they drive drunk until it's too late," said Frank Mitidieri, a sales manager for Kramer Entertainment, creator of the program.

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Drunken Driving Simulator



Simulator makes two more stops

Didn't get out to DMAAC's Urban Campus on Wednesday? There are two more chances to try out the simulator:

TODAY: L.W. Courter Center on the Boone Campus, 1125 Hancock Drive, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m.

FRIDAY: Building 5 on the Ankeny Campus, 2006 S. Ankeny Blvd., 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.





Lydia Smith, 20, of Des Moines tries the drunken-driving simulator at DMACC's Urban Campus on Wednesday. At left is Jonathan Wilson, 23, of Kramer Entertainment. At right is Adam Majerus, 26, of Des Moines.



The keys in the ignition of the simulator read: "DUI —You Can't Afford It"

"If we can show them, they'll see the effects firsthand," Mitidieri said.

Originally sponsoring a tour featuring comedians, entertainers and game shows, Kramer Entertainment shifted its focus to education and awareness in the late 1990s, Mitidieri said.

The current program started four years ago.

"For young people like college kids, things can go in one ear and out the other," said Mitidieri. "We didn't want to put anyone on a soapbox."

Hadi Atal, head of the Student Activities Council for the Des Moines Area Community College Urban Campus, said the tour was a natural choice to bring to students.

"We want our students to know what mistakes can happen if they're driving drunk," Atal said of the council's choice to bring Save a Life to campus.

"We wanted to give a heads-up to people before they decide to get behind the wheel," he said.

Reporter Meghan V. Malloy can be reached at (515) 284-8065 or memalloy@dmreg.com.

STORYCHAT

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