



Simulation demonstrates pitfalls of DUI

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By EMILY STRANGER

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Jerome Dunson drove off the road, side-swiped a police cruiser and ran through two stop signs Tuesday afternoon.

Even though he was driving like he was intoxicated, Dunson was completely sober. All he had to drink was a Mountain Dew and a few sips of water in between computer science classes at Coastal Georgia Community College.

Like dozens of other college students, Dunson participated in a simulation designed to teach students the dangers of drinking and driving.

"That really makes you feel like you're driving drunk...sitting in that seat," said Dunson, gesturing toward a life-size car seat and steering wheel.



Coastal Georgia Community College student Jerome Dunson reacts to "crashing" a virtual car on a drunken driving simulator at the school's student center Tuesday. (Bobby Haven/The Brunswick News)

Students had an opportunity to participate in the virtual reality experience throughout the day. It was part of the Save a Life tour, a national campaign to promote alcohol awareness and provide participants a first-hand experience on the effects of driving a motor vehicle while intoxicated.

Brian Deldyga, senior manager of the Save a Life program, said the simulator imitated tunnel vision, which occurs when a driver has had too many drinks.

"When you drink and drive, you focus on the center of the road and don't pay attention to what is going on around you," he said. "When your head and eyes are not moving, you have turned into a 2,000-pound bullet riding straight down the road." Deldyga said he knows from experience the tragic consequences of driving under the influence.

"I lost a fiancée and three best friends to drunk driving accidents," he told students.

In the simulator, students were surrounded by three monitors that displayed the driver's point of view, complete

with side and rear view mirrors.

As they continued to drive through the virtual streets, their intoxication levels would intensify and make turning the wheel and pressing the pedals more difficult.

Many students compared the experience to playing a three-dimensional video game.

"I won't be driving drunk anytime soon," said Fabian Wilson, a student at the college, after he sat behind the wheel of the simulator.

Participants also took computer surveys that questioned their knowledge about drinking and driving and watched an educational video.

Dave Leenhout, director of student life at the college, said the Save a Life program is the kick-off of Alcohol Awareness month, which will run through the end of October.

He said the school has other special events planned, including a poster campaign, to enhance the education of students and promote safe choices.

"It's a real, in-your-face kind of activity," he said, adding that curious students had been gathering around the simulator all day.

