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HCS may bring in national program to address underage drinking

By:



HARLAN -- School officials here continue to review options that will help students understand the consequences of underage alcohol consumption, and the dangers drinking and driving pose.

Harlan Community is expected to team with up to three area school districts to bring in a nationally-acclaimed presentation to provide students with the undeniable fact that drinking and driving kills.

Entitled the National How to Save A Life tour, the interactive and admittedly graphic presentation is designed to be an aggressive alternative to other alcohol and its dangers programs.

HCHS Principal Kent Klinkefus said the program was discussed at a recent meeting of Hawkeye 10 Schools principals, and many were in favor of taking a further look at the program.

"It's a little more aggressive than what we've been doing," he said, adding that "it's a pretty big step for us."

The National Save A Life Tour has been developed to provide a state-of-the-art, interactive driving experience that simulates driving under the influence of alcohol. This experience is significant in that the drivers are sober and forced to realize the influence of alcohol on their driving skills.

The presentation is day-long, with a one-hour assembly for all high school students followed by five hours of additional programming, including the drunk driving simulator, for a select group of students.

Simulator participants have the opportunity to experience the effects of bad judgment and deteriorating driving skills due to alcohol consumption. The simulator is a real-life, fully-functional Ford Taurus dashboard, and while spectators watch the large screens that feature what the driver sees, they also can see the face of the driver, a helicopter view of the vehicle in traffic and an indicator level of the impairment of the driver.

After completion of the simulation, the driver receives a mock citation and recording of the experience.

Funding already has been secured for the program through the Shelby County Coalition on Alcohol and Drug Abuse, and it's hoped to bring the program to area schools April 2-5, 2007.

School board members endorsed the idea. "We feel it's very important in our district," said board president Steve Kenkel.

Discussions concerning the school's role in curbing underage drinking began earlier this year after a number of students were ticketed for minor in possession. School officials said at that time they need to be proactive in educating students to make the right choices.

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