

Students get taste of driving impaired

By ALISHA CALL
USD 470

Students at Arkansas City High School experienced drunk driving this week in a safe and sober way. The simulator was part of the national "Save a Life Tour," an alcohol awareness program intended to show students the effects of driving under the influence.

Each senior took a turn behind the fully functioning wheel and dashboard of a Ford Taurus. The simulator was complete with LCD monitors to give the driver and the students watching a realistic 180-degree view of the action.

According to the "Save a Life Tour" Web site, the simulator is set up to have just a split-second delay in its responsiveness to help ensure the driver will experience about every tendency a truly intoxicated driver would go through behind the wheel.

"It was pretty cool," Mitch Hewitt, senior at Arkansas City High School, said. "I was surprised by how realistic it seemed," he said. "I felt a weird sensation when I was driving, like I was actually moving."

Aside from the simulator, the entire student body attended an assembly put on by the "Save a Life Tour." The program featured footage of real-life drunk driving incidents, emergency room footage and testimonies from the staff members of "Save a Life" who are all victims, in some way, of drunk driving accidents.

Kevyn Ternes, the School Resource Officer at the high school thanked the high school staff for being so supportive and he hoped the students enjoyed it and learned how serious the effects of driving under the influence can be.

"I think it's especially relevant this close to prom," he said. "People often think they drive OK but this shows them that's not the case."

Ternes said the Ark City Police Department received a promotional DVD from the company this past summer and decided it was something the high school students needed. Once the decision was made, the police department made the down payment for the program and Ternes and Anthony Salas, SRO for the middle school, went to local businesses and organizations and raised the rest of the \$6,750 it took to have the program at the high school for two days.

Blythe Colquhoun, Ark City senior and member of SADD, the organization that sponsored the event, was pleased with the support they were shown.

"I think it's really cool how the community just chipped in to help," she said. "This event is something we needed."

Colquhoun said she knows there is a drinking problem among high school students in general.

"Thankfully, we have not had to deal with any major accidents due to drunk driving," she said.

High School senior Courtney Crane said the driving was hard.

"You don't think it would be when you first sit down because you are completely sober. Then you start driving."

Jesiah Tasior added. "It was fun at first. Then it got hard when you think you are driving drunk."