

## Simulator shows brutal reality: Drinking dissolves driving skills

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BY DEAN NARCISO

THE COLUMBUS DISPATCH

The Crown Victoria slowly pulled from the stoplight, took a sharp right and wended its way through city streets.

Then the booze kicked in.

Normal turns became hairpins; avoiding a crash was like riding in bumper cars.

And that T-intersection? That's where Rick Mathews met up with the law.

Mathews is a custodian at Dublin Scioto High School. And because so few showed up there for last night's driving simulator, he got to test his skills driving "drunk."

"I flunked," he said. "I hit a cruiser."

Riverside Methodist Hospital's trauma-services department hosted the Save a Life Tour event, designed to show young people the damage that can be done driving after drinking.

But except for after-school programs at two high schools and the Franklin County Safe Communities project, only employees of OhioHealth were invited, said Michael Maher, injury-prevention coordinator at Riverside. It kept the turnout of teenagers small.

By 7 p.m., only six students had driven the multimillion-dollar simulator that during 3½ minutes makes sober drivers react as if they're driving with a 0.34 percent blood-alcohol content.

Ryan Park's father, Bryan, and his grandmother, Nancy Buel, arrived early, thinking there might be lines.

"I jumped at it because I thought it would scare the bejesus out of him, so maybe he wouldn't drive drunk," said Buel, who works at Riverside.

Ryan, 16, a sophomore at Dublin Scioto, plans to get his temporary license this summer. He said the simulator let him discover firsthand what he has been lectured about.

"If you do make that choice, your judgment will be impaired."

Dublin Scioto also hosted the simulator in May, said Maher, explaining why so few from the school attended last night.

Anthony Williams, a school-resource officer with South High School, learned about the event through a friend.

"That shows you better not touch the alcohol," he warned Shalla' Mar Robinson, 16, who hopes to get her license in two weeks. She turned to Williams, crossed her arms and frowned. "I don't drink," she said.

Chris Geysbeek, manager of the Save a Life event, offered a nonpreachy approach. And he has experience.

He had to identify the mangled body of a friend with whom he had been motorcycle riding while drunk seven years ago in Michigan. "If I can get just one kid to walk away saying, 'You know what, I'm not going to do it,' then this multimillion-dollar system is all worth it."



JAMES DECAMP DISPATCH

**John Wilson gives a few pointers to Ryan Park, 16, as he takes a turn at a driving simulator in Dublin Scioto High School's gym. The simulator lets drivers experience what happens if they drink and drive.**