



Think Before



A summer's nightmare



These are photos taken of what used to be a Ford Mustang until one fateful night that a 20-year-old driver chose to drink and drive. The story displayed tells of how the driver and his passenger were killed. However, there was another passenger in the back seat who was wearing their seatbelt. They survived, but it will take year for them to recover.

A sober look at drinking

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"The majority of deaths related to drunk driving are passengers," Ken Boell of the Clackamas County Forensics department said as he reminds us that when you drive drunk, that many lives, not just yours, are endangered.

The Forensics unit was not the only outfit present at Clackamas during Alcohol Awareness week. During the afternoon of May 22, the college held an alcohol awareness workshop. Medical examiners from the police department, and members of American Medical Response also provided displays and demonstrations for Clackamas students.

My stop at the Forensic department's display was also frightening. A board displayed pictures of totaled cars. Boell informed

me that in five of the accidents people died, four of them passengers. In the other two accidents, people were severely injured; one was a police officer.

The first item on display was an almost unrecognizable Ford Mustang that had been completely totaled by a drunk driver. In place of the two front seats were the engine and the hood of the car. A plaque at the rear of the vehicle told the story of a 20-year-old drunk driver who killed himself and his 23-year-old friend, and severely injured the 17-year-old backseat passenger.

The next stop at the exhibit was the Medical Examiner's truck. Real human remains (bones) and pictures of death scenes were on display to remind students of the ultimate consequences of drunk driving. Deputy Medical Examiner Jeff Gibson informed

me that on average there are 50 fatal car accidents in Clackamas County each year, and 25 to 30 of those are the result of drunk driving.

The next stop was an interactive display. Students were given the opportunity to try on "drunk goggles" and then attempt to walk the line. I was surprised at how much impaired vision affects a person's equilibrium and sense of direction. "Can you see the line?" Lucie Drum, the Community Education and Injury Prevention Specialist, asked a goggle-wearer. "Yeah," the student replied, and proceeded to stand about 18 inches to the right of the white line. Observing the behavior of people with drunken vision in a sober state was funny. Thinking that some people actually get behind the wheel of a car in that state was frightening!

When I tried the goggles on I was unable to walk heel to toe or even in a straight line. With all my other senses perfectly intact, I could not control the direction I was moving or the position of my feet. Drum informed me that the goggles simulated the vision of someone with a blood alcohol level of .17, or the equivalent of about 6 beers in an average person.

Alcohol Awareness week was an important wake-up call for college students. I have heard students around campus saying that alcohol awareness week is unnecessary because everyone knows that drinking and driving is dangerous. If everyone knows, why are people still being needlessly killed by drunk drivers?

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DRINKING FACTS

*Drinking may be a factor in 80 percent of boating fatalities, says the National Transportation Safety Board. According to the National Safety Council, boating accidents are this country's second-largest cause of transportation injuries.

*According to the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism, alcohol is involved in an estimated 38 percent of drowning deaths. Data assembled recently for the Surgeon General shows that this number rises to between 40 and 50 percent for young males.

*40-50 percent of all diving injury victims consume alcoholic beverages, according to the same report.

DON'T LET ALCOHOL PUT A CHILL ON YOUR SUMMER

*Don't let alcohol put a chill on your summer, urge your fellow students and staff to help.

Citizens in the area understand a few simple facts about alcohol. The sunshine, warmth and long days of the coming season provide a wealth of opportunities for recreation and relaxation, but, when mixed with alcohol, these activities can turn dangerous and even deadly.

*People under the age of 21, drivers and people planning water-related recreational activities should stay away from alcohol.

*Programs to help people with drinking problems: AA, Al-Anon, Alateen, Children of Alcoholics.

Information compiled by Salena De La Cruz from www.ncadd.org

