



ALCOHOL: Students become aware

Katie Aamatti Clackamas Print

Above: ASG member Kelsey Downs is tied down to a stretcher. For the simulation, Downs "died" on the way to the hospital.

Below: With the help of a local medic, firefighters Justin Lynn, Mike Corless and Trevor Cooper (left to right) tie *The Print's* Mandie Gavitt to a stretcher.

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"The events are probably as close as you can get, but it is staged," he said.

Justin Lynn, a firefighter in the event, echoed this statement by saying, "Nobody's hurt, there's no stress, there's no safety issues, there's no timeframe issues. To the public it's, 'Yeah they're cutting up a car but nobody's hurt.'"

A firefighter came to my side of the car and asked if I had had alcohol. Even for a staged event, I did not want to admit to underage drinking. I believe my response was, 'Maybe a little bit.'

Lynn popped the tires to prevent the car from rolling, while Trevor Cooper, another firefighter on the scene, climbed through the back window to get in the vehicle. In our "accident" the glass had already been removed from the car to prevent real injuries. In an accident where the back window is still intact, the firefighters would use tools to break the glass to get inside. Cooper held Kelsey's head steady and communicated with me about what had happened. Kelsey and I both appreciated that the firefighters really helped to put us more at ease.

I was supposed to be screaming but was too nervous. Later Cooper informed me that victims rarely scream once firefighters are on the scene.

We were covered with another tarp to protect us from falling metal or glass. They then used the Jaws of Life and cut off our doors, starting with the passenger side. Kelsey was removed from the vehicle and put on a backboard to be loaded into the ambulance. Once she was at, Cooper supported my head while I was safely out. I was put on a backboard and once I was tied, strapped and secured in, I was rushed to the ambulance.

Terrified, I asked the firefighters not to drop me while I

was on the backboard. Cooper said this is a common request.

The medics from the ambulance helped the firefighters, but Lynn said this would not happen at a real accident. Firefighters have special gear that medics do not have to protect them from hazards such as gasoline. Medics normally wait elsewhere and the victims of the crash are brought to them. However, with less people and no safety concerns medics were able to help.

Though Drum has been working these events for 10 years and was a first, she said the events still have an impact on her. "Because responders do everything they would in a real accident, it gets you every time," she said.

After the extraction was performed there were two speakers: Ron Hasmon and Jill Spencer.

Spencer lost her daughter, a Clackamas High School student when the car she was riding in hit a telephone pole, killing her instantly.

Hasmon killed a mother and two children in January of 1988 when he drove drunk. After serving a prison sentence, he began telling his story in 1996.

"I thought a lot (while in jail) about what I had done and how it affected people, especially the husband and father left behind," he said. "I wanted to give a purpose and a meaning behind what I did to my victims."

Alcoholics Anonymous member Brent, who didn't want his last name used, said he has heard plenty of excuses as to why people drink and drive, such as: "I was only going to have one," "I drive better when I'm drunk" and "I'm special, it will never happen to me."

Brent said driving drunk is just selfishness. "It's not like they get in the car and think 'I'm going to kill people;' they just wanted to drink."

Oregon Impact Executive Director Susan Lehr said that she feels events like Alcohol Awareness are important because drinking and driving hurts everyone. Her cousin was severely injured when she was hit by a drunk driver.

"She never knew it could happen to her because she didn't drink," said Lehr. "Drinking and driving affects everyone."

Though Lehr will be leaving Oregon Impact in June, she said her years with the organization have been remarkable. "I've really become aware of how important it is to get this message out to the community. I'm so grateful (the college is) making a difference to keep ... students safe."

Wachlin said that he felt events like the one at CCC are effective, but mostly in the short term. He said it is important to perform such events right before a time when drinking and driving is more prominent, such as prom and Memorial Day weekend.

"If it prevents one person from getting in a wreck it's worth it," said Lynn, the firefighter who cut my door.

High schools often hold similar events through Oregon Impact around prom season. According to Lehr, the high school program is more focused on the short-term decisions, whereas college programs strive to accomplish a better understanding of alcohol because college students are often of age to drink.

According to Drum, colleges events are more challenging as students have the choice to attend. However, Drum says that CCC generally has good turnouts for the event.

Is acting in my future? Probably not. However, after being "rescued" by the firefighters and EMTs I feel a much greater appreciation for first responders. Knowing how devastating these accidents can be really solidifies the importance of not driving while impaired. I doubt I'd be laughing in a real accident.

If you've been drinking, there are numerous options to keep you from endangering your life and the lives of others by getting behind the wheel. If a friend or family member can't pick you up, call a taxi or the drunk driving dispatcher for a ride at 503-722-4042.



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