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Mock crash impacts students at CLHS

BY DANI STRENKE



There were two "victims" who didn't survive the mock crash held at Chisago Lakes High School last Thursday. A Lindstrom firefighter places a sheet over one, as a group of juniors and seniors watch the demonstration. The SADD chapter at CLHS, along with advisor Amy Milloy, organized the event two days before the CLHS prom.



Lindstrom firefighters and LREMS paramedics work to stabilize the actors portraying a prom couple, riding in a car struck by a teen drunk driver. In the mock crash, the girl in the car didn't survive.

Students at Chisago Lakes High School had the opportunity to see first hand how drinking and driving can change lives forever, during a mock crash demonstration at the school April 27.

Advisor Amy Miloy, along with CLHS members of SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions), organized the first-ever mock crash at the school. Lakes Area Police, Lakes Region EMS, Lindstrom Fire Dept., North Memorial and Grandstrand Funeral Home also participated.

The scenario was set up first in the Performing Arts Center, where seniors and some juniors watched a video of six student actors from CLHS. The scene was a couple driving to prom when they are hit head-on by a car with four teenagers inside, all of whom have been drinking.

Then, the group was brought outside to the PAC parking lot, where two smashed cars were staged. One person lay on the windshield of the other car. Emergency calls were put out and emergency personnel responded with lights flashing and sirens blaring.

For the next 30 minutes, the students watched as the actors were pulled or extricated from the two vehicles.

Of the victims, four were taken by ambulance or airlifted in the North Memorial helicopter and two were not so lucky, laid out on the pavement in front of the students and covered with white sheets. Later, they were zipped into body bags and put in the back of the coroner's van. This was done as the student playing the drunk driver was given a breathalyzer, handcuffed and put in the back of a squad car.

The scene wrapped up with Chief Stenson being interviewed about the tragedy, naming the students involved and the extent of their injuries.

Stenson asked the students to not only make smart decisions about drinking and drug use, but smart decisions in all areas of their lives.

Miloy and the SADD members chose to hold the mock crash last week in an effort to remind students to make smart decisions at their prom, which was held Saturday. April was also chosen for the event because it is Alcohol Awareness Month and SADD Awareness Month.

Following the demonstration, the SADD group and student actors met in the cafeteria and discussed how it went. A Lakes Area Police officer asked the group if they thought it had made an impact.

"I think some of them were getting it," one student said. "Some turned away because they didn't want to see," another said.

CLHS Principal Dave Ertl commended the group for their efforts. "I want to thank all of you for an outstanding job," he said. "If we have changed the decision of just one of our students, wouldn't it be worth it – yes. And you have had an impact on that and I'm so proud of all of you."

The students have been planning the mock crash since October and said they would like to do it again. Miloy said probably every two years the school will try to stage a mock crash.

The only disadvantage of having the demonstration in the parking lot was finding a way for all the students to see. Miloy said she knew some students in the back couldn't see very well and they may look at trying to get the crash to an area where bleachers can be set up next time.

The crash demonstration was videotaped and copies will be available for all those students involved. One of the SADD members said her parents are planning to play the tape at her graduation party.

SADD organizes a variety of activities at CLHS throughout the year.

In October, members held a Red Ribbon Week, handing out red ribbons for car antennas and also talking to elementary students in DARE programs.

In December, the students organized a Click It or Ticket campaign, handing out raffle tickets to students "caught" using their seat belts.

SADD members at CLHS are: Johnny Hamilton, Andrea Nelson, Kasey Maier and Danielle Luettinger. Tom's Towing helped by towing the junk vehicles after the event.

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