

“Words to be Heard” Scholarship

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To encourage awareness in schools about the consequences of underage drinking and driving under the influence, I would implement an intensive, week-long and school-wide event. This program would immerse students in activities that illustrate the dangers and realities that underage drinking and drunk driving present. For the senior high school students, this program provides an in-depth look at the consequences of underage drinking and alcohol poisoning as they prepare to transition into the next stages of their lives. For the younger students, the week's activities would be a learning experience as well, but the focus would shift more to statistics and methods of prevention. Both age groups would participate in an activity at the end of the week to further display the serious consequences of drunk driving.

The older students would attend daily assemblies featuring victims and relatives of victims. The speakers would give testimonies about their experiences with drunk driving and the huge impact it has had on their lives. Each year, the school district could ask willing participants from the local community to share their stories. This would help students understand that drunk driving has affected members of their own community and is a real and tangible problem. Speakers from Mothers Against Drunk Driving would be encouraged to attend, as would local celebrities, such as athletes or coaches. Kids would be encouraged to speak to parents and relatives about the effect that drunk driving has had on their lives and to share these stories with their classmates. Local police and hospital officials would also come and speak about their experiences with drunk driving. Police officers would stress the legal consequences of driving under the

influence and give examples of the punishments that a person driving under the influence would face.

The older students would also view a video intended to show the violence and reality of drunk driving accidents. At the end of the week, students would learn strategies for dealing with situations involving drinking. Students would also learn about the alcohol content of different drinks and how they affect the legal blood alcohol content (BAC). Senior students would be taken to the police department and would be able to see what would happen if they were arrested as an underage drinker. The seniors would receive statistics about fatalities and injuries related to underage alcohol consumption in college. They would also meet the victims who have experienced the dangers of overconsumption. The seniors would then be shown the emergency room at a hospital and would speak with doctors and nurses who deal with underage drinkers.

Younger students would participate in activities that are less graphic but still illustrate the effects of drunk driving. Students would try on beer goggles and attempt to "drive" a swivel chair to stimulate the impairment caused by alcohol. A police officer would come and talk to the students about the legal repercussions of drunk driving and show the general procedure that officers use to determine if a person is intoxicated. Drunk driving statistics would be posted at various locations around the school and each class would play a Jeopardy-type game towards the end of the week to test their knowledge. The winner of the game would receive a small prize as incentive.

Younger students would also develop skills to show various ways to prevent drunk drivers at a party or in other situations. They would learn techniques for refusing alcohol, how to take an intoxicated friend's keys, and different approaches to calling parents or trusted adult friends if they are in a frightening situation. The students would be given papers to share with their parents so that whole families are actively engaged in the process of underage drinking and drunk driving prevention.

For the benefit of all grades, posters would be placed around the school all week. Drunk driving victims' stories would be placed on the back of the doors in the bathrooms and

statistics and facts posted in the cafeteria. In each class, teachers would be encouraged to initiate class discussions about drunk driving and to share their own experiences. The community around the school would be encouraged to participate in the awareness week as well. Restaurants and local businesses could allow posters in their establishments and provide wristbands that would raise funds for the school event.

Both the younger students and the older students would attend a school-wide assembly in the morning at the end of the week to begin a day-long program focusing on the effects that drunk driving has on a community. Every fifteen minutes, a willing student would be pulled from a classroom and given a black shirt. Their face would be painted white and they would not be permitted to speak throughout the day. At the end of the day, there would be another school-wide assembly, and all of the students who had their faces painted throughout the day would be called in front of the school so that the student body could see the number of people that would be affected by the consequences of drunk driving. After this demonstration, the student body would be taken outside to watch a dramatization of a car crash by local fire and police departments and the simulated care for a victim of such a crash.

This program, if it were executed annually, would provide awareness and initiate prevention of drunk driving and underage drinking. Students would not only learn the facts, but they would also experience real-world examples from their community. Presenting the facts to younger students and then providing real-world evidence as they grow older would illustrate that drunk driving doesn't just result in numbers on a paper, but causes death, injury, and grief to thousands and thousands of people every year. Students would graduate with a personal connection to the victims of drunk driving and with knowledge of the consequences of underage drinking.