

# “Words to be Heard” Scholarship

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## Brittany Smith



The "Words to be Heard" program that I would propose would be to hold alcohol awareness assemblies and events each month during the school year. Each assembly or event will have a specified goal with hopes of discouraging underage drinking and drunk driving. During the first month of school, a "Sober Club" will be formed. This club is for students who are passionate about wanting to bring awareness to the effects of alcohol and what it can do. This club will also be an integral part of organizing and planning of the "Words to be Heard" activities. Throughout the school year, the Sober Club will create posters with anti-drinking-and-driving messages to place around the school along with information regarding the upcoming assemblies and key speaker(s).

### September - Parent Involvement

The goal for this assembly is to get parents more involved in their children's lives. Kids look up to their parents, so it is very important to start educating about alcohol at a young age. Statistics show that 74% of kids say their parents are the primary influence on their choices about drinking. Interventions as a family can decrease underage drinking by 30-60 percent. Also, when kids have a close relationship with their parents, they are less likely to make bad choices when it comes to alcohol. In hopes of a large-turn-out, this assembly will be held in the evening because most parents would not be able to attend during the day. As an added incentive, prizes will be awarded to the first 100 students that walk through the door with their parents. For this assembly, speakers from MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) will be invited to speak about the influence parents can have on their kids.

## **October - Effects of Alcohol**

The goal of this assembly is to educate students on the effects of alcohol and what it can do to the body. A Medical Examiner will be invited to come and share stories of how alcohol affects the body and what it can do to your vital organs. Pictures of organs affected by drugs and alcohol will be visible to the audience.

## **November - Legal Effects of Alcohol**

For this assembly, the goal is to educate students about the legal ramifications of underage drinking and drunk driving. Police officers will be invited to talk about how alcohol related crashes are not accidents; they are crimes. The crash could've been prevented had the driver not been impaired. The officers will talk about the process they go through when they pull over a suspected drunk driver or encounter a possible underage drinker. There will also be a slideshow rolling with pictures of DUI crashes.

## **December - A DUI Offender's Story**

During this assembly, there will be two DUI offenders telling their stories about killing someone while drinking and driving. The offenders will talk about his or her decision to get behind the wheel while intoxicated and what it has done to their lives. The goal would be to discourage drunk driving by showing students the effects that killing someone has had on a convicted offender.

## **January - A DUI Victims' Story**

Families who have lost loved ones due to a drunk driving tragedy will come and share their stories during this assembly. The speakers would first tell the students about their loved ones and what they meant to their lives, and how tragically they were taken from them. The speakers would then inform the students of the emotional effects that their loved ones' deaths had on them. While the speaker is talking, a slideshow of victims around the world would be playing in the background. The main goal of this assembly would be to show how death affected the families when it could've been prevented had an intoxicated driver not gotten behind the wheel.

## **February - Learn to say NO**

Teaching students how to say no is the goal of this assembly. Once again, members of MADD (Mothers Against Drunk Driving) will be invited to come in and help educate students on the importance of just saying no. Peer pressure is a huge part of underage drinking, and if students would just say no, underage drinking would decrease.

## **March - Present a Play called "Convicted"**

Instead of an assembly, a play will be put on by the school's drama club. The play will follow the trial of a popular student who was convicted of vehicular homicide while driving under the influence. He made a bad decision by driving home after getting drunk at a party and ended up killing someone. The goal of the play is to show that this could happen to anyone because many students have the attitude that "it will never happen to me."

## **April - Field Trips to Jail/Morgue**

With prom season and graduation approaching, the senior class will visit the local county prison and morgue. Students will be given a tour of the county prison to see what being incarcerated is like. Most times, people who commit alcohol-related crimes do prison time. At the morgue, the coroner will show students the difference between a healthy liver and the liver of an alcoholic. They will also show pictures of drunk driving crashes, and explain what it is like for families that have to come identify a loved one's body.

## **May - Mock Car Crash**

In front of the school, an announced mock drunk driving crash involving police, firemen and EMT's will be staged in which a well-liked student will be "killed." Throughout the day, that student would wear a white shirt and not be able to talk to anyone. At the end of the day, a mock funeral would be held for the student.

## **June - Overview of all Assemblies presented (Q&A Session)**

Due to graduation, the assembly in June would be an overview of everything the students learned throughout the school year. Graduation is a big event and underage drinking occurs. An overview would help remind students of the dangers of drinking and driving. All of the guest speakers from throughout the series will be asked back to participate in a question and answer session with the students.

I truly believe that this type of awareness needs to be brought to the schools. My family has personally been affected by the choice of a drunk driver. In April 1985, my Aunt Tammy was killed by a drunk driver. Because of that drunk driver, I never had the opportunity to meet her, but I have heard stories and have seen the pain it has cause my grandparents, my uncle and my dad.