

PHS Students experience the effects of drinking

Drive state DUI simulator

by Theresa Marthey
STAFF WRITER

KINGWOOD — Preston High students learned about the dangers of driving under the influence thanks the DUI Simulator Program brought to the school by the West Virginia Alcohol Beverage Control Administration (WVABCA).

The program is sponsored by State Farm, the West Virginia Governor’s Highway Safety Program and the National Alcohol Beverage Control Association, and has traveled to all the public and private high schools in West Virginia, according to Gig Robinson.

Several students were surprised at their reactions as the simulator increased in difficulty while mimicking blood alcohol levels (BAC) from 0.02 to 0.08.

“I was all over the place,” Gabrielle Gamk said. “And I thought I was being cautious.” “I didn’t think it was going to be that hard,” Ben Dietz said. “I am definitely not going to drink and drive.”

Student Dan Lowe said the controls of the simulator became more unresponsive the longer he drove.

“At first it was nothing,” Lowe said. “I was just traveling safely on a snow covered road, then I wasn’t.”

The simulator has various programs for snow-covered roads, sunny days and then can throw in a fog, rain and nighttime scenarios.

The simulation is a three-minute program, but most participants did not make it through the whole thing without having an accident or being pulled over by the police.

Gig Robinson with the WVABCA said the simulator encourages youth to make good decisions while behind the wheel and throughout life.



Staff photo by Theresa Marthey

PHS Principal Dr. David Pastrick, center, speaks with driver’s education students as they wait to get into the DUI Simulator on Wednesday. WVABCA educator Dan Pickens, left, discussed the consequences of DUI driving with the students.



Staff photo by Theresa Marthey

The DUI Simulator video screen shows drivers their blood alcohol content, speed and mimics reactions and reaction times while under the influence.

“Students care more about making good decisions than people sometimes give them credit for,” Robinson said. “They care about their future, wanting to work and have their freedom.”

“This simulator reinforces

the need to make those wise decisions,” Robinson continued.

PHS Teacher Bruce Hugins said he has been bringing the program to PHS for a couple years now.

“This is a great teaching



Staff photo by Theresa Marthey

Dan Lowe, left, watches while another student is in the DUI Simulator chair on Wednesday at PHS. West Virginia Alcohol Beverage Control Administration employee Gig Robinson looks on.



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PHS Student Chase Gamblin got behind the wheel of the West Virginia Alcohol Beverage Control Administration DUI Simulator on Wednesday.

tool for the students,” Hugins said. “We also use the goggles in class that impair their vision and also mimic

drunk driving, but this program is really an eye opener.”

Robinson said the range of attitudes are amazing when

students enter the simulator.

“We get both girls and boys who get a little over confident and don’t last very long,” Robinson said. “But then you gave girls and boys who are over cautious and still don’t anticipate what is coming around the next corner in the program, so to speak.”

In addition to the simulator, WVABCA Educator Dan Pickens spoke with the students talking about the consequences of DUI driving.

Pickens asked students what the possible penalties were for DUI driving, and in less than 30 seconds the students rattled off answers of fines, points on their driver’s license, revoked driver’s license and jail time.

“In that short period of time, you named all the biggest consequences of drinking and driving,” Pickens said. “You understand the reality to be able to name those that fast, and accurately know what is going to happen.”

“If you understand what is going to happen,” Pickens said. “What do we still see so many DUIs?”

“Because you never think it could happen to you,” Gamk said. “And it impairs your judgment.”

“Absolutely,” Pickens said. “All of you know what to not to do and how to avoid it.”

“Number one is not to drink and drive,” Pickens continued. “Number two, if you are, have a designated driver.”

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