

Mock DUI serves as warning

Tamaqua Area students witness violent repercussions of irresponsibility

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TAMAQUA — One victim lay on the hood of a car beside the smashed windshield. Another lay on the trunk of another car.

Nearby, a University MedEvac helicopter and three ambulances waited while rescue workers pulled victims from the wreckage and strapped them to body boards. Workers pulled numerous empty beer cans from one of the vehicles.

Tamaqua Area High School students watched silently from the bleachers.

“It was a little frightening,” said Allison Martin, a senior who portrayed one of the victims. “You have these men you’ve never seen right in your face asking you questions. You don’t really know the answers and you’re just really worried about your friends.”

The mock crash Wednesday morning was organized by Steve Chamberlain of Tamaqua Area Community Ambulance, in conjunction with

Tamaqua Area’s student Emergency Response Team, to warn students of the dangers of driving under the influence of drugs and alcohol.

“If we save one life with this, I’m happy,” Chamberlain said of the event, which took hours to plan and thousands of dollars to create. “If we save more than one life, I’m happier.”

Eight members of the school’s emergency response team, including Martin, played the victims of the “horrific” accident.

Organizers wanted to show students what a real accident scene could be like — including parents being called to the scene.

“It was nerve-racking, it really was,” said Lynne Rohde, Tuscarora, whose son, CJ, was a victim. “It was fake, but it was nerve-racking to see him laying on the hood of a car, bloody, and being taken out in the backboard and all. It was awful.”

CJ was removed from the hood of the car and taken for a short flight from the field by the MedEvac helicopter. The helicopter returned to the



NICK MEYER/STAFF PHOTO

Senior Chelsea O’Brien plays an injured victim Wednesday during a mock DUI accident held at Tamaqua Area High School Stadium.

field near the end of the exercise.

“I told him this morning this is the only helicopter flight on the Life Flight you’ll ever have,” she said.

After the scene was under control, Ed Morland, Regional EMS Service,

and Schuylkill County Coroner David J. Dutcavich addressed students.

The students playing the victims at the scene spoke to seniors who are

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preparing for their prom on Friday.

"If you're going to drink, just please don't get into a car," Chelsea O'Brien, a senior, said. "Don't put your parents through that stuff. Don't put your friends through that stuff."

Principal Raymond J. Kinder said the school puts on a

talk regarding DUI every year before the prom.

"Hopefully everyone will make good decisions coming up to Friday and beyond," Kinder told the students.

Kinder said he thought the student received the message that "one bad decision cannot only cause issues for you, but also for everyone around you."

Students who played victims in the event, in addition to Martin, Rohde and O'Brien, included Billy Garber, Ryan Oldt, Nick Boyle, Tamra Veronsky, Sandra Coombe and Kyle Smith. Students Justin McCarroll and Chris Fetter acted as emergency responders to the crash along with area police and ambulance groups.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2005, 636 people were killed in Pennsylvania in DUI-related accidents. The most recent statistics from NHTSA on teen DUI-related deaths were compiled in 2003. That report shows that 87 teens were killed in DUI-related accidents in the state in 2003.