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6 April 2005

“Arrive Alive, Don’t Drink and Drive”

As president of Portland High School’s SADD chapter, Students Against Destructive Decisions, I would like to share a few things that we have tried to do to spread awareness.

I believe that if students put together an organized group, they can have a lasting impact on their peers when it comes to drinking and driving. Students often learn the most from people of the same age; peers are an important source of education.

Last year, my junior year, I played a major roll in our school’s SADD chapter. It was on May 13, 2004 that we put on a successful mock accident. The impact and success of the re-enactment is dependent on who is involved and how well the re-enactment is performed. I feel that if the best actors participate, a mock-accident can have a lasting impact. With the sounds of victims crying, sirens screaming, and blue lights flashing, our SADD group made an impact on our student body. Enclosed are a few pictures of the event. There is one of me on a stretcher, one of a killed victim’s body in a body bag, and one of two students hugging and crying in reaction to the scene. In looking at the picture of myself on the stretcher, I also look at the faces on every student staring at my body. It looks as though each and every student is in complete shock, as if this drunk-driving accident was real. Along with crying students, several others were on the verge of tears.

For weeks after we performed the mock accident, I got comments from people saying “You did such a great job. Thank you for acting as a victim.” With two smashed cars, glass,

blood, alcohol bottles, injured victims, and even dead victims, Portland High School's mock accident had a lasting impact on many of my peers.

Another activity sponsored by our SADD chapter, and now an annual event, is awareness bags put together by our members and distributed during the Thanksgiving game. Each year we find new statistics and tips for people to intervene to stop drinking and driving. At the annual Portland-Deering "Turkey Day" game, the members of SADD place an awareness bag, filled with pamphlets and brochures, under the windshield wipers of as many cars as possible. The literature in the bag helps to make people aware of what really goes on around them, with regard to alcohol use. The information can open parents' eyes to what their children could be doing. Maybe with education and exposure they can help to make sure their sons and daughters arrive alive. At the same time, statistics included in the bags expose the community to the idea of how many people are actually involved in drunk driving and how many lives are lost. Hopefully, kids will reconsider their actions when they learn about the frightening statistics.

This year, I searched to find a new pamphlet to include in the awareness bags. "Get the Keys: How you can intervene" offers ideas of how to get people's keys. Taking the keys of a driver who has been drinking decreases the likelihood of a drunk driver getting behind the wheel, and increases the chances of others arriving home alive. Another new enclosure was "Don't Lose it!" It provides additional statistics about drinking and driving. Hopefully, the literature's eye opening facts will have an impact on the students and their parents.

As another of this year's activities, we had a guest speaker come into our school. She was the mother of Len Bias, a once future Celtics basketball player. She spoke to the entire student body of Portland High School. Dr. Bias did an amazing job. She motivated the crowd with her fabulous preaching on life, and how drinking and partying are not the highlight of high

school, or even adult life. She shared how her son had substance abuse and that he overdosed before he ever got the chance to play with the Celtics. The discussion included the problems associated with substance abuse including underage drinking. Speakers like Dr. Bias are able to impact students by sharing real experiences. Drinking and drugs, along with driving under the influence, can kill. After hearing Dr. Bias speak, the student body at our school was moved emotionally. She had made a visible impact.

Student organizations, such as SADD, work to educate their peers. Their sponsorship of programs such as well thought out and planned mock-accidents, awareness bags, and guest speakers who are either survivors of drunk driving accidents, or who have experienced loss as a result of drinking and driving accidents make a difference. The activities have a lasting effect on the students and help them to understand the reality and seriousness of drunk driving. With education especially provided peers, the students and members of our community are more likely to “Arrive Alive” and less likely to “Drink and Drive.”