Shattered Dreams:

It’s about drinking and driving
It’s about living and dying

by

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“Shattered Dreams” is an education experience that reminds us of the dangers associated with drinking and driving. Unique in its design and powerful in its impact, this program also reminds us that too many young lives have already been lost and countless others severely impaired because of the tragic consequences of underage drinking and drinking combined with driving.

In the United States, and Texas in particular, the tragic loss of life, productivity, and potential resulting from teen drinking and driving is staggering. The following data illustrate the effects:

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for people from 15 to 20 years old.

In 2002, 3,827 drivers 15 to 20 years old were killed, and an additional 324,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes in the United States. Twenty-nine percent of these teen drivers had been drinking.

About three out of ten Americans will be involved in an alcohol-related auto crash at some time during their lives. This needless suffering can be prevented. The attitudes of some teens influence the development of the problem of underage drinking and driving. Teens do not expect to be injured, much less to die from injury. Some even view disability of death from injury as an act of God or as an unpreventable accident. Such beliefs make it difficult for them to assume responsibility for the consequences of their actions.

In addition, many teens and adults do not appreciate the sheer magnitude of the results of drinking and driving. The number of teens who die annually in alcohol-related crashes is equivalent to having a 727 aircraft full of teenagers crash every two weeks. One can imagine the media attention that would be directed toward the crash of a commercial airliner filled with teenagers; however, this same number of teen deaths on the nation’s roadways is barely even noticed.
Communities cannot afford to ignore the devastating impact of underage drinking and driving. The “Shattered Dreams” program is designed to help prevent many of the problems resulting from teen drinking and driving. Throughout the program, teens and parents are exposed to the seriousness of such problems.

The “Shattered Dreams” program involves the dramatization of an alcohol-related crash on or near a high school campus, complete with police and EMS response, emergency room treatment, family notifications, and the arrest and booking of the driver.

The crash scene drama is played out before the student body during a school day. The entire school, including teachers and other workers are observers to the ‘rescue’ being acted. All actions take place in real-time. All medical, fire and law enforcement personnel actions are based solely on this scene being reality. Equipment and materials used are real, but have been modified for use on people who do not have a medical condition.

The following photographs were taken during a “Shattered Dreams” program at Bellville High School in Austin County in southeastern Texas in the spring of 2004. There were over 100 personnel involved including: Emergency Medical Services, law enforcement, hospital personnel, fire departments, school personnel, funeral homes, and community leaders.

Each sequence of photos is designed to give an overview of what was happening on scene and later on at the hospital and at the jail. Therefore, the photos are not sequential, but are arranged to help interpret particular actions taken during the course of the program. Additional photographs and several videos of other “Shattered Dreams” programs are available.
**Sequence One: Set-up of Accident Scene**

In order to make the accident scene as real as possible, cars from real collisions are brought to the scene and placed where observers will be able to see what is happening. Student actors are coached to act appropriately and make-up is extensively used to make each victim’s injuries seem real, including at least one person who was ejected from the vehicle and has died on impact with the ground. One Emergency Medical Services person (a paramedic) is designated as a spokesperson. This person relays information to the observers about what is happening within the scene of the accident being acted in front of them. All personnel whether EMS, law enforcement, or fire department act as if this is a real accident scene.

**Sequence Two: Priority One: Safety, Seriousness, and Rescue**

In the United States, major accidents require much help. In Texas, EMS personnel are required to take charge of a situation from the deployment of medical, fire department and law enforcement personnel, equipment and resources. However, in Austin County, we have found the EMS and fire department personnel need to work very closely together to not only help victims of accidents, but to keep each other safe as well. Several firefighters have been extensively trained to take control of accident scenes and release medical personnel to work with victims. Often, additional equipment and personnel are necessary, and radio contact must be maintained with law enforcement for traffic control and unexpected situations. If victims are seriously injured, a helicopter may be necessary for the fastest transport to a major trauma hospital.

At a major accident, EMS personnel are taught to work with firefighters to safely remove victims from the automobiles. EMS personnel direct the rescue, often climbing into vehicles to establish patient contact and to begin medical treatment including but not limited to airway support, cervical spine stabilization, bleeding control, and intravenous access for fluids and
medications. Firefighters, in turn, use hydraulic and other equipment to open doors, remove roofs, and shift other pieces of the car that may be trapping victims.

**Sequence Three: EMS medical response**

EMS personnel have already begun their work, but once victims are freed from the vehicle, the work of getting patients ready for transport continues. C-Collars, backboards, webbing or strapping down, and stretches are all necessary for the safe transport of patients. Assessment and diagnosis of each patient is necessary for the paramedic to quickly decide on medical treatment on scene or fast transport to a specialized medical facility.

**Sequence Four: Air Transport**

In Austin County, we are fortunate to have access to three different medical helicopter services. For this “Shattered Dream” program, Critical Air provided a helicopter and flight paramedics to show how their job is carried out during a rescue.

Firefighters are called to make sure sufficient area is available for a helicopter landing and that there are no electrical or utility lines above the landing zone. Global positioning satellite systems now provide accurate location monitors for the landing zone. Flight paramedics are trained to quickly determine and treat threatening conditions and to stabilize patients for transport using the helicopter.

**Sequence Five: At the hospital**

After leaving the scene of the accident, patients are taken to a local hospital for further treatment. All actions were photographed and videotaped for later viewing. The hospital created an emergency room situation for the “Shattered Dreams” program, moving all necessary equipment and personnel to make everything seem more real.
Patients intubated on scene were placed on ventilators. All patients were placed on necessary monitors. Parents of victims were allowed into hospital rooms as were grief counselors. Based on the chosen scenario, several of the victims “died” in the hospital. Many parents had difficulty seeing their son or daughter in the emergency room even though the situation was not real.

Sequence Six: The Intoxicated Driver

One of the stated goals of “Shattered Dreams” is to help young adults make good choices and to recognize that there are consequences to their actions. In the United States, law enforcement officers must determine the cause of the accident. If alcohol is involved, officers will subdue and arrest those involved. Those arrested, if they do not need medical treatment, are taken to jail where they are fingerprinted, tested for alcohol content and placed behind bars awaiting a judge’s ruling or a court date.

Death is always a possible consequence of drinking and driving.

Sequence Seven: Other Emphases

Funeral homes are often called directly to the scene of an accident where there has been a death. Victims who die on scene are transported not to the hospital, but to the funeral home to await notification of the family.

The accident scene is a major part of the “Shattered Dreams” program, but it is not the only part. Throughout the day other elements of the “drama” unfold. To give students a better understanding of the number of alcohol related deaths, an individual dressed as the “Grim Reaper” appears periodically throughout the school day to select a new victim. In Texas, a
person is killed by alcohol related accidents every 15 minutes. By the end of the school day, every student had one or more “dead” friends missing from class.

The victims were removed from class and taken to a retreat center where they spent the night and discussed topics relating to alcohol and driving. All students returned to class the next day for a mock funeral for the accident victims.

This wrap-up assembly features those who played roles in the previous day’s drama, including the “crash” victim, the drunk driver, their parents, and participating law enforcement and medical personnel. Letters from students, parents and members of the community whose lives have been affected by teenage alcohol use and drunk driving create a close for the program and reinforce its dual message for the teenage audience: DON’T DRINK UNTIL YOU ARE 21, and NEVER DRINK AND DRIVE.

Please consider the severity of the problem of drinking and driving here where you live and work. The “Shattered Dreams” program is one way that the community of Austin County is committed to the prevention of this problem in our towns and on our roads.