

Hoquiam DUI Awareness Later This Week With "32 Minute" Program

Local News

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HOQUIAM, Wash. - Emergency Responders plan to crash a car, and send several Hoquiam High School students to their virtual grave this week. The 32-minute program is presented by the Police department, High School, and the Grays Harbor Traffic Safety Task Force to raise awareness of driving while intoxicated.

Susan Bradbury with the Grays Harbor Traffic Safety Task Force tells KBKW every 32 minutes someone in the US is killed by an impaired driver. beginning Thursday, Hoquiam students will hear a dispatch report of a collision every 32 minutes over their PA system. A Grim Reaper will also visit classrooms and pick out their "victims," who will have their face painted white and will not interact with other students for the rest of the day. Students will also see a mock car crash with full paramedic response and a LifeFlight evacuation, as well as an investigation and arrest for driving while under the influence. The Keynote speaker at a Friday assembly will be a 19 year old from Olympia who killed his best friend in a DUI accident last year.

The following is a synopsis of the program from Susan Bradbury of the Grays Harbor Traffic Safety Task Force: What this project does is put students as close to an impaired driving fatality as you can get without it actually happening. Statistics show that every 32-minutes someone in our country is killed by an impaired driver. Previously every 15-minutes…so we are making progress. Students have been selected in advance with parental permission and involvement. Parents and students have been meeting with staff so they fully understand their roles and the delicate nature of the program. On day one, students will go to class as normal. Every 32-minutes, a dispatch report of a collision will go over the school intercom. At some point in the day, the selected students get a visit from the “Grim Reaper” in class. Paramedics will put them on a stretcher and a close friend or sibling the student will read an obituary over the loud speaker. The “dead” student will be taken to our staging area, their face will be painted white and they will wear a black robe. The student then returns to class but will not talk or interact with anyone the rest of the day. They are “dead”. On Thursday, we will have a mock car crash in front of the entire student body where paramedics work on an “injured” student. Officers will investigate the intoxicated driver and make an arrest. A LifeFlight helicopter will land at the scene to remove one of the grievously injured students from the mock crash. At the end of the day, the “dead” students will be taken to a local hotel where law enforcement and school officials will chaperone. Students will take part in team building activities and learn about the dangers of drugs and alcohol. Some family members will receive a visit from law enforcement and receive a mock death notification. Law enforcement will go through what would happen had their child really been involved in a fatal accident. (Parents have been asked to do this ahead of time and can opt out of the death notification if it is too difficult for them) The next morning, the “dead” students are taken to breakfast and then to school. They will prepare for the assembly taking place later that morning. Finally assembly: At the final assembly on Friday, the entire school and all parents are invited. This is highly emotional as students speak about their perspective, parents talk about what death notification visit was like and describe officers telling them their child was deceased. The keynote speaker is a 19-year old from Olympia who killed his best

friend of 16-years in a DUI accident last year. He goes into detail about how a year ago he was in the bleachers like one of the student, and how quickly and easily his life was forever changed.