

Simulated crash hopes to educate Central students

By **Jim Herr** - June 8, 2018



Cheektowaga Central's SADD organization, in conjunction with the Erie County Medical Examiner's Office, Cheektowaga Police, Forks and Rescue firefighters, and AMR Ambulance put on a simulated crash on June 8th. (Jim Herr/Cheektowaga Chronicle)

CHEEKTOWAGA – The blood was fake and the work to free students from a mangled car was simulated, but the message was clear for 150 Cheektowaga Central High School Seniors hours before they embarked on their Prom Night.

“Be safe and make good choices about your life, because if you don’t, then something seriously messed up could happen in a split second,” said Marissa Sullivan, a Senior who belongs to the student organization Students Against Destructive Decisions.

She played a deceased student who was ejected from a crash simulation Friday morning put on by SADD in conjunction with the Erie County Medical Examiner’s Office, Cheektowaga Police, Forks and Rescue firefighters, and AMR Ambulance.

“These are the people they’re around every day, and when they see them in this type of situation, it’s really important because these are the people you care about, people you know, and it can happen to anyone at any time,” added Ms. Sullivan.

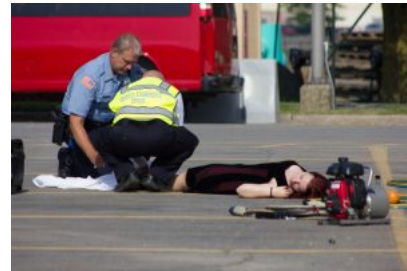
This morning's simulation was narrated by Forks Fire Chief Tom Brennan. He told the story of a two-car crash that killed two students, injured two others, and resulted in a DWI arrest.

SADD teacher advisors Rodney Staszak and Lori Conti say it's important for the students to witness the visual impact of the scene first hand to realize the seriousness.

"I believe that was accomplished this morning. Having a student play dead was I'm sure quite difficult for some of the students to see, but we just want to stress the importance of the seriousness of car accidents and driving distracted and drunk driving," said Ms. Conti. "You don't realize the impact it has on your family, your friends, the community."

Thomas English, an investigator with the Erie County Medical Examiner's Office, told the students that fatal accidents involving young people are some of the hardest scenes to work.

"This is a pretty sterile environment. Usually, car accidents are pretty rough," said Mr. English. "One of my worst scenes was a four fatal car accident, and having to bring four sets of parents into our office for identification purposes was probably one of the longest nights of my career, and that is not something that I would wish upon anybody."



The Cheektowaga Police and Erie County Medical Examiner's Officer attend to a deceased student at the scene of a simulated crash at Cheektowaga Central on June 8th. (Jim Herr/Cheektowaga Chronicle)

Motor vehicle crashes are the [leading cause of death for U.S. teens](#) according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. In 2015, 2,333 teens in the United States ages 16–19 were killed, and 235,845 were treated in emergency departments for injuries suffered in motor vehicle crashes.

Mr. English stressed the importance of wearing a seatbelt, not driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and putting away the cell phones while driving.

"It's a weapon in your hand's kids. We see it far too often at these types of accidents. To be quite honest with you, some of the injuries I've seen in these types of accidents – you're friends will probably not be seeing you in a casket because you wouldn't be viewable," added Mr. English.

