



TRABUCO HILLS HIGH SCHOOL
May 23rd and 24th
EVERY 15 MINUTES PROGRAM

Introduction:

The Every 15 Minutes Program is a two-day program focusing on high school juniors and seniors, which challenges them to think about drinking, driving, personal safety, and the responsibility of making mature decisions and the impact their decisions have on family, friends, and many others.

This first-of-its-kind prevention and education program was developed by the Chico Police Department in 1995 through an ABC Grant Assistance to Law Enforcement (GALE) grant. In 1996, the National League of Cities fittingly awarded the Excellence In Community Policing Award to the Chico Police Department.

The program's name was derived from the fact that in the early 1990's, every fifteen minutes someone in the United States died in an alcohol-related traffic collision. However, with the implementation of new laws, grass roots organizations like Mothers Against Drunk Driving, Students Against Drunk Driving and programs such as these, the death rate is now one every thirty minutes, a figure which continues to be unacceptable.

Goals and Objectives:

The program brings together a broad coalition of interested local agencies with the goal of reducing alcohol-related traffic fatalities among youth. The partnering of law enforcement, the Orange County Department of Education, the Office of Traffic Safety, local hospitals, emergency medical responders, businesses, service clubs and school districts validates the importance of working together to ensure a healthy community.

The result of eight to ten months of careful planning is this two-day program called Every 15 Minutes. Prior to the actual event, approximately 30 students, representing a cross section of the school, are selected as participants.

Program Components:

Day One: One student is removed from class every fifteen minutes and becomes one of the "living dead." A uniformed officer and the "Grim Reaper" enter the classroom and read each student's obituary to those remaining in the class. The obituary is posted in the classroom for the remainder of the school year. Throughout the day, members of the living dead place their tombstone in a temporary cemetery on the school campus so friends and classmates can mourn their loss.

(10:45- 11:30am ~ Periods 4 and 5) A simulated drunk driving collision involving pre-selected high school students is staged on the Mustang Run for the benefit of the juniors and seniors. It begins with a pre-recorded 911 call that triggers an emergency response by law enforcement, firefighters, paramedics and the coroner. Each agency uses the drill as a training exercise that simulates real life responses.

Paramedics treat a student(s) for minor injuries. A second critically injured student is trapped inside a vehicle and must be rescued by firefighters using the Jaws of Life. Another student is declared dead and removed by the coroner. The student designated as the drunk driver is given a field sobriety test and is arrested for driving under the influence.

After the collision, the drama continues for the students involved in the crash. Officers book the drunk driver into jail. After booking is completed, the drunk driver must call a parent to explain what he or she has done.

Emergency medical responders transport the critically injured patient to a local trauma center where doctors simulate attempts to save his or her life. Unable to do so, the doctor on duty has the grave task of notifying the student's parents of their child's untimely death. Meanwhile, the student who died on-scene is placed in a body bag and driven away by the coroner.

At the end of the day, law enforcement and school chaperone's take the living dead to an overnight retreat. (Once the students become members of the living dead, there is no contact with family or friends until the conclusion of the assembly on day two.) At the retreat, the students participate in team building activities and learn first hand from people who have been involved in or affected by a drunken driving collision. The evening ends as the students write letters to their loved ones, expressing the thoughts they would convey if they had not been killed on that particular day.

Day Two (8:30-10:00am~Period 2 and 3): The living dead students return to the school to attend an assembly for the juniors and seniors. The living dead students are seated in the front of the audience opposite their parents. During the assembly, everyone watches a video of the previous day and listens to a powerful keynote speaker. Several of the living dead students read excerpts from the letters they wrote the night before. They share with their friends and classmates what it felt like to die without having the chance to say good-bye.

The assembly concludes with a call to action challenging everyone to make responsible choices when alcohol is involved. After 24 hours on an "emotional roller coaster," parents and living dead students are reunited. Parents and teens are typically overwhelmed with emotion and gain a new sense of love and commitment to one another to make the right choices.

After the assembly, all the participants gather for a reception. The program helps the students see members of their community in a different light. They are no longer just cops, doctors, paramedics, or firefighters, but also friends, mentors and human beings who care about the young people in their community.

The two-day Every 15 Minutes Program is very dramatic and emotional, and purposely so. Teenagers are constantly reminded about the dangers of drinking and driving. They know the intellectual statistics. However, many teens share the belief it will never happen to them.

Results and Impact:

This powerful program is designed to create awareness among students that they are not invincible. This program helps open the emotional doors, and it addresses a problem most teens do not know exist. They experience first hand how their actions affect the lives of so many other people.

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