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P.A.R.T.Y. program brings mock collisions to Taber

Events teach Grade 9 students about dangers of impaired and distracted driving

TABER – Students from the Horizon and Holy Spirit Catholic school divisions are participating in mock collisions over the next three weeks to learn about injury prevention and the dangers of impaired and distracted driving.

The exercise is part of Alberta Health Services' (AHS) Prevent Alcohol and Risk-Related Trauma in Youth (P.A.R.T.Y.) program and targets Grade 9 students, many of whom will soon be getting their learners' permits. Students learn how to develop good driving habits — such as avoiding drugs, alcohol and texting while driving — as well as ways to reduce risks, prevent injuries and make good decisions.

“Youth are in the driver’s seat when it comes to making good decisions,” says Megan Heroux, AHS Health Promotion Facilitator. “Through the P.A.R.T.Y. program, we teach about the consequences of making bad decisions, like choosing to drink and drive, or speed or text while behind the wheel. We can keep youth safe by teaching them how to avoid unnecessary injuries— simply by making better choices.”

About 250 students from Taber, Barnwell, Vauxhall and neighbouring communities are participating on April 30 and May 6, from 9 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.

At 9:15 a.m., emergency responders and police will attend a mock rollover caused by a drunk driver at the Taber Civic Centre parking lot. This will be followed by educational activities: a rollover simulator, impairment goggles, a visit to a funeral home, and presentations from injury survivors.

“The youth of Taber are the future of our town,” says Wendy Noble, Chair, Taber Community Against Drugs (TCAD). “Helping youth make healthy, educated choices around alcohol, drugs and other risk-related activities involves an entire community of support. The P.A.R.T.Y. program is an excellent opportunity to do this and to show Taber youth they matter.”

Motor vehicle collisions remain one of the leading causes of injury, hospitalization and death among youth ages 15-19. Using cellphones (hand-held or hands-free) while driving slows reaction time by up to 18 per cent, making drivers four times more likely to crash.

Educational programs such as P.A.R.T.Y. are contributing to fewer deaths and injuries on Alberta roads. Since 1965, traffic fatalities are down 32 per cent, intersection fatalities down 43 per cent, unbelted fatalities down 40 per cent, and speed-related fatalities down 22 per cent.

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Community partners in the P.A.R.T.Y. program include TCAD; the Community Action and Prevention Society; student actors; the Taber Police Service; the RCMP; Taber Emergency Services; Southland Funeral Home; Wildrose Autobody; Southwest Alberta Road Safety Society; Brain Injury Relearning Services; as well as the Emergency Medical Services, Population Health and Addiction and Mental Health portfolios of AHS.

Alberta Health Services is the provincial health authority responsible for planning and delivering health supports and services for more than four million adults and children living in Alberta. Its mission is to provide a patient-focused, quality health system that is accessible and sustainable for all Albertans.

- 30 -

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