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P.A.R.T.Y. program to stage mock collision in Fort Macleod

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

FORT MACLEOD – Students from F.P. Walshe High School are participating in a mock collision later this month 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.

“A bad decision only takes seconds to make but can last a lifetime,” says Andrea Klassen, a health promotion facilitator with AHS. “We want to empower youth to make good decisions and to help them understand that good choices prevent injuries and keep everyone safer.”

About 60 students are participating in a number of educational activities on May 12, from 9 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., including a rollover simulator and presentations from injury survivors, as well as exploring topics such as distracted driving, drugs and alcohol, speed and dangerous driving, and mental health issues.

At 12:15 p.m., emergency responders and police will attend a mock rollover outside of the high school to show students what can happen when a driver chooses to drink and drive.

“This day is an excellent part of an ongoing educational program aimed at getting students to understand actions and think about consequences,” says Bill Forster, principal of F.P. Walshe High School. “All of the partners involved have done a great job creating a memorable, interactive, hands-on experience for students.”

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 are down 43 per cent, unbelted fatalities down are 40 per cent, and speed-related fatalities are down 22 per cent.

Community partners in the P.A.R.T.Y. program include the Southwest Alberta Road Safety Society; F.P. Walshe High School, student actors and the Livingstone Range School Division; the Town of Fort Macleod, including the local fire department and RCMP; Brain Injury Relearning Services; Eden's Funeral Home; Lethbridge Exhibition Park Commercial Vehicle Enforcement; as well as the Emergency Medical Services, Population Health, and Addiction and Mental Health portfolios of AHS.

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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.

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