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## P.A.R.T.Y. program comes to Crowsnest Pass

*Event teaches Grade 9 students about dangers of impaired and distracted driving*

CROWSNEST PASS – Students from Crowsnest Consolidated High School are participating in a mock collision next week 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.

“Motor vehicle collisions are the leading cause of death for Alberta teens,” says Andrea Klassen, a health promotion facilitator with Alberta Health Services.

“The majority of fatal collisions are the result of driver errors and bad decisions, such as speeding, following too close, texting or not wearing a seatbelt. The P.A.R.T.Y. program highlights the consequences of these decisions and empowers youth to make smarter choices.”

About 50 students from Crowsnest Pass are participating in the event on June 9, 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 in the high school parking lot. This will be followed by educational activities involving a rollover simulator, impairment goggles and presentations from injury survivors.

“We are very excited to be hosting the P.A.R.T.Y. program,” says Lori Prentice, an academic counsellor at the school. “It’s an incredibly valuable experience for our Grade 9 students and the fact it is a very local event with local partners makes it even more important. It’s been a pleasure to work with AHS in bringing this program to our school.”

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.

Although the number of collisions can vary from year to year, educational programs such as P.A.R.T.Y. are contributing to fewer deaths and injuries on Alberta roads. Since the Government of Alberta first introduced the Traffic Safety Plan in 2007, 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 the Southwest Alberta Road Safety Society; Crowsnest Consolidated High School; student actors and the Livingstone Range School Division; the Town of Crowsnest Pass, including the local fire department and RCMP; Brain Injury Relearning Services; Lethbridge Exhibition Park; Commercial Vehicle Enforcement; and AHS Emergency Medical Services, Population Health, and Addiction and Mental Health.

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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