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FEATURED

Students learn the dangers of impaired driving in DUI simulator

By GREG JORDAN Bluefield Daily Telegraph Sep 22, 2015



The dangers...Samantha McKinney of James Monroe High School takes a turn in the 'Drunk Driving Simulator' at Bluefie The simulator, which approximates the sensation of driving a vehicle with progressively reduced reaction time, gives user experience the dangerous effects of drunk driving.

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performing simple tasks. Their eyes are an indication, too: deputies and other law enforcement officers are trained to watch for dilated eyes, odor, disorientation and other signs of alcohol or drug use. They cannot bluff their way past the tests, Saddler said.

“Hopefully, they will make a choice that will make a difference in their lives,” Woods added as more students tried the goggles test.

Outside, students were experiencing the sensation of drunk driving thanks to a mobile DUI simulator used by the West Virginia Alcohol Beverage Control Administration. Users try to maneuver along a mountainous roadway not unlike the ones found in West Virginia and Virginia. Drivers try to avoid deer, other vehicles and pedestrians while the computer degrades their responses.

“Oh, I hit a kid!” senior Cheyenne Salmons cried. Stepping from the trailer, she recalled the experience. “Well, I got intoxicated and he got in front of me. There were two little boys and I got both of them. I was driving in a rural area, and there were no houses. It was very hard. If you swerve this way, it will pull you that way.”

Senior Rebecca Young lined up for a simulated DUI experience. “I’ve actually done this one before,” she said. “As your alcohol level goes up, it’s hard to keep straight. I was very surprised.”

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BLUEFIELD — They look like standard safety goggles, but they give their wearers a taste of what it's like to do a sobriety test when even one of their senses is impaired.

Drivers education students from Mercer County and neighboring school districts are learning this week how driving under the influence makes getting behind the wheel of a car a dangerous move. The demonstrations began Monday when James Monroe High School students visited Bluefield State College.

Inside the student center, Lt. G.W. Woods and Deputy K.M. Saddler gave the visitors a standard field sobriety test: listen to instructions and walk a straight line while going heel to toe. But first, the students put on goggles impairing their vision.

For many of the young men and women, walking a straight line proved to be almost impossible.

James Monroe sophomore Noah Ramsey wobbled more than once before deciding he had had enough. He laughed and returned to the sidelines.

"I'm done. I'm done," he told his classmates. Kris Hoke, a James Monroe junior, tried the goggles, too. "It's like 60 little circles and you can't see anything," Hoke stated.

Junior Shana Brant tried walking the straight and narrow path. "It feels like your eyes are way to the left," she said. "You're shaking and it's really hard to balance yourself."

Woods said the goggles change the wearer's visual acuity. All the students were sober, but changing that one sense affected their balance.

"These kids are just now starting to drive," Woods stated. "If you do drink, be smart enough to get somebody else to drive you home."

Saddler pointed out how people who are actually intoxicated have even more trouble with a sobriety test. First, they are usually nervous and have trouble following simple directions. If asked for only their driver's license, they will have trouble getting out their wallet and