

Peace Officer and Fire Department team up for impaired driving presentation at HLPS

Matthew Marcone

A High Level Peace Officer and Fire Department Captain were teaming up to teach teenagers the dangers of impaired driving at High Level Public School (HLPS) on Wednesday, December 9, 2015.

High Level Peace Officer Spencer Wicks and High Level Fire Department Captain Steve Norton also gave two more presentations at the school on December 7.

As students are reaching the age where they begin to drink, experiment with drugs and drive, Wicks said the message of their presentation was to make sure those things do not mix.

He also encouraged the students to be courageous when it comes to recognizing that a friend or relative is too impaired to drive.

"I know it's not popular to take someone's keys away when they've been drinking," said Wicks. "I've done it before. I've had to hide their keys, they were really mad at me but in the morning they thanked me for what I did. It's not going to be the popular decision at the time but it could save someone's life."

Wicks and Norton encouraged the kids to make alternative arrangements,

walk home, wear warm clothes or call a taxi if they are impaired.

Norton said that he has lost friends to impaired driving and that when they respond to these types of incidents, it is rarely that impaired driver that is most seriously injured.

"It's the people they hit and the people in the vehicle with them," said Norton. "It's not just you that you're affecting, it's your friends and loved ones."

This can lead to survivor's guilt, which was the case in one of the worst impaired driving accidents that Norton responded to several years ago just north of High Level.

An impaired mother was traveling with her father and child lost control of the vehicle, killing her father and nearly her son as well.

"She has to live with survivor's guilt for the rest of her life," said Norton. "Take these stories seriously because I don't want to come out at 3:00 a.m. and pull your dead body out of the vehicle. You guys have just as much power to say no as everyone else."

The punishment for testing above the 0.08 per cent blood alcohol content limit is an immediate license suspension and having your vehicle taken for three days.

Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) drivers, like those at HLPS, are also subjected to higher restrictions and must have a zero alcohol content of blood, otherwise they face immediate 30 day license suspensions.

Wicks said that under new legislation police can draw blood at the scene, although this is not something they do in the region. Instead they are provided with this information from local

hospitals. A person can face criminal charges for refusing to provide a sample.

Wicks also said that driving while impaired can be an expensive mistake to make. The average fine is a \$1500 mandatory driving prohibition along with car insurance rates that can triple.

Some convicted drivers must also take the Ignition Interlock Program which has an average annual cost of \$1400. There are also fees that come along with

getting your license back.

As well, certain employers will not hire a person with a criminal

record and several countries can deny a person entry based on an impaired driving charge.



MATTHEW MARCONE

High Level Peace Officer Spencer Wicks talks about the long term consequences of impaired driving to a group of students at High Level Public School on Wednesday, December 9, 2015.



MATTHEW MARCONE

On Wednesday, December 9, 2015, High Level Public School students listened to High Level Fire Department Captain Steve Norton's story about once responding to an accident where an impaired mother crashed her car and killed her father just north of town.

He was speaking about the horrors associated with