

MADD at Eastdale

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"She's not coming back."

Those four words from a crying mother, whose daughter was fatally injured in a drinking and driving accident, struck to the core of hundreds of Eastdale Secondary School students Friday.

Eastdale hosted MADD Canada's multi-media presentation called *Truth*, a graphic depiction of the perils of alcohol and drugs.

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STAFF PHOTO ANGUS SCOTT

MADD Canada, partnered with the Welland Safe Community Partnership, presented *Truth*, a multi-media presentation about the dangers of driving while intoxicated on alcohol and drugs to students at Eastdale Secondary School on Friday. MADD Niagara chapter president Anne Groves, right, speaks with Eastdale students, from left, Megan Elliott, Anita Foster, Torrie Luchyshyn and Sarah Goodyear.

Message was heartbreaking

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Using three large screens, a high-tech sound system, and music from currently popular bands, the presentation is designed to grab the attention of teens.

"I thought it was very graphic," said Grade 12 Eastdale student Sarah Goodyear. "But that's what you need to get through sometimes."

Megan Elliott, a Grade 10 student, admitted she cried during the presentation.

"It was really sad to hear that story," said Elliott. "It made me realize when people choose to drink and drive, they're really making a dumb choice."

"It was so heartbreaking," said Torrie Luchyshyn, a Grade 12 student. "Those are ordinary people and it can happen to anyone."

Students said the presentation will make them look at their own actions in a different light.

"It made me realize the impact drinking and driving can have," said

Marc Dennis, Grade 10.

The presentation not only showed how drinking and driving can affect your own life, but also the lives of others. It conveyed messages against getting into a car being driven by friends who have been drinking or taking drugs, and also demonstrated how others' lives are destroyed.

"It made me think about my personal experiences," said Anita Foster, Grade 10.

If she has to make a choice in the future about getting into a vehicle when the driver is impaired, Foster said she'll refuse.

"I think I'll approach it differently now," she said.

The MADD Canada presentation was sponsored by the Welland Safe Community Partnership in conjunction with the Niagara chapter of MADD.

Shanza Mohammed of MADD Canada has been touring with the multi-media show since last fall. He said the impact of the presentation on

students is obvious.

"The best part about this is it's about people, victims and families, MADD knows on a personal level," said Mohammed. "A lot of students have preconceptions about what this is going to be. But I try not to preach to them and that seems to help."

Mohammed said MADD is having trouble keeping up with demand from schools who want the presentation for their students.

The presentation starts off with a loud musical intro to get the students' attention, then kicks right into the story about a 16-year-old girl who was struck down while walking on a highway while she was drunk.

"That just seems to hit the kids, because that's their age," said Mohammed.

Anne Groves, president of the Niagara MADD chapter, has seen the impact the multi-media presentation has on students.

"It really connects with them," she said.

A large part of the presentation focuses on encouraging teens to make right choices in their lives. It doesn't tell them to not drink, or not to do drugs, but it does honestly lay out possible consequences of making those choices.

"You only have one life to live and you have to make the right choices," said Luchyshyn. "You only get one shot."

Groves said the local chapter of MADD continues to need support. Students were lined up at a MADD table in the front foyer of the school after the presentation was over, where they picked up information pamphlets. They were able to purchase red wristbands with the words "Choose Courage" on them.

Some also signed up as MADD volunteers.

Groves said the organization is looking for volunteers in all age groups. Anyone interested in volunteering or in obtaining more information about MADD Niagara can call Groves at 905-735-2248.