



Harris County Hospital District

NEWS RELEASE

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HCHD Launches 2009 Shattered Dreams at High Schools

HOUSTON (March 18, 2009) – Just in time for Spring Break and the upcoming prom season, the Harris County Hospital District launched its presentation of Shattered Dreams, a program at area high schools that dramatizes the deadly consequences of underage drinking and driving.

Shattered Dreams is an educational experience developed by the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission to remind teenagers about the dangers associated with drinking and driving. It reminds the public that too many young people have died and countless others severely impaired because of underage drinking and drinking and driving.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Houston and Harris County are among the top regions in the nation for alcohol-related traffic fatalities recording 1,172 for the period of 2002-2006.

Ben Taub General Hospital, part of the Harris County Hospital District, treats many of the area's crash victims as the city's busiest emergency center at its Ginni and Richard Mithoff Trauma Center. Members of the hospital's Trauma Services Department coordinate outreach programs like Shattered Dreams to help prevent future accidents.

The hospital also plays an integral part in the day-long activities of Shattered Dreams. Each re-enactment of a deadly vehicle accident is held on or near the campus and involves the participation of students and parents as victims, family, friends, as well as a suspected drunk driver. The scene unfolds with a complement of police, firefighters, emergency medical personnel, funeral hearses, court hearings, family notifications and the arrest and booking of a drunk driver.

The first of HCHD's four scheduled Shattered Dreams this school year was March 5 at Klein Collins High School in Spring. The re-enactment was performed in front of a student body of 1,500 juniors and seniors.

Among the participants in the staged drama were Rhonda and Glenn Glasco and their 17-year-old daughter, Lauren. For the Glascos, playing the role of grieving parents was at times too real. Even some spectators wiped away tears as they watched the couple's emotional reaction to seeing their daughter placed in a body bag and wheeled into a hearse.

"I knew it was all an act, but seeing your child pretend to be dead and in a body bag made it too real," said Rhonda Glasco. "Just this morning my husband and I saw her get ready for school, and now she's pretending to be dead."

Even her father, Glenn Glasco, lost himself in the role. "I knew it was all make believe, but when you think that it could happen, you lose it," he said. "I cried a lot, and I wasn't expecting that."

Ben Taub Hospital will coordinate other high school Shattered Dreams presentations April 8 at Klein, April 15 at Klein Oak and May 14 at Atascocita. The staff has organized presentations since 2006 at other high schools including Cesar Chavez, Galena Park and Sam Houston.

"When these preventable accidents occur, they not only affect the victims, but also their families, friends, health care providers, law enforcement, school officials and others," said Robin Garza, hospital event coordinator. "This is a tragic domino effect we want to stop before it starts."

Senior Jessica Welshans, 18, believes Shattered Dreams makes a difference. "Telling us about the dangers of drinking and driving just doesn't compare to showing us," she said.

Among the spectators, 70 parents witnessed the four-vehicle re-enactment. The staging involved a number of agencies: Cypress Creek EMS, Spring Fire Department, Klein ISD Police, PHI Medical Helicopter, Brookside Funeral Home, Palm Spring Recovery and Harris County Precinct 4 Constables.

School nurse and event organizer Sue Wilkins said officials added an overnight stay at a local church for 40 students because of the overwhelming student response to the program. The church group mirrored a group of 40 others who spent an overnight stay at Ben Taub Hospital. Students at both gatherings listened to speakers, watched educational videos and wrote letters to parents pledging never to drink and drive.

"This is something that we will never forget and that Lauren will remember the rest of her life," Rhonda Glasco said. "I don't want anyone to feel the loss of a child. Thank goodness this is just make believe."

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PHOTOS ATTACHED

Cutlines:

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1. Klein Collins High School juniors and seniors gather at the re-enactment's perimeter to watch the real-life response of police, fire and emergency personnel at a staged four-vehicle accident. More than 1,500 students and 70 parents attended the March 5 Shattered Dreams presentation sponsored by Ben Taub General Hospital, part of the Harris County Hospital District.

2. Parents Glenn and Rhonda Glasco of Spring play a pivotal role in the Shattered Dreams dramatization at Klein Collins High School. Both give emotional performances, which at times seemed too real for them, as they act out a reaction to news that their daughter, Lauren, 17, also a performer, is killed in the scenario. More than 1,500 students and 70 parents attended the March 5 Shattered Dreams presentation sponsored by Ben Taub General Hospital, part of the Harris County Hospital District.

The Harris County Hospital District is the public health care system for the nation's third most-populous county. It provides quality health care for more than one million patient visits each year to residents of Harris County. It operates Ben Taub General Hospital, Lyndon B. Johnson General Hospital, Quentin Mease Community Hospital, 12 community health centers, a dental center, a dialysis center, eight school-based clinics, 13 homeless shelter clinics and five mobile health units.