

Teens learn importance of driving while not distracted

by Thomas Tavaziva |

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University of Mary Hardin-Baylor nursing students worked together with Safe Kids Mid-Texas and Central Texas Regional Advisory Council to help educate teen drivers.

CTRAC and Safe Kids Mid-Texas sponsored the Driver Simulation and Education program and Belton High School hosted the event at the Health Science Center, 616 E. 6th St.

It was the first time that the high school had hosted the program.

"We were very excited to participate in this project with UMHB," Health Science Instructor Betty Higdon said. "This was a wonderful opportunity for our kids because it provided them with the chance to do something they don't usually do."

The nursing students provided information for teens about driving with distraction and driving under the influence. They explained that driving with distraction was not limited to texting or drinking while driving, but distractions also included eating while driving, putting on make-up or lack of sleep.

Education sessions were led by the UMHB students for a three day period which ended last Friday.

Scott & White Healthcare and Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center, Waco helped provide the fatal vision goggles and driving simulator which were used by the students in the hands on experience.

The medical centers sent representatives who were affiliated with Safe Kids Mid-Texas and Teen Safe to assist in the program.

"The nursing students approached us two months ago and we offered them our equipment, like fatal goggle visions, to help with their demonstration," said Lauren Shamlan, who works with

injury prevention department at Hillcrest Baptist Medical Center. "It was a great program. The teachers loved it and the students responded very well."

The program was part of UMHB's Capstone Project for nursing students, which is assigned to them prior to their graduation. As part of the project, the students had the responsibility of getting in touch with the school district and other organizations, including Texas Department of Transportation, to make the project a success.

"We enjoyed being able to educate teens about the dangers of driving distractions," said UMHB senior Ellen O'Meara. "Reinforcing the risks involved with dangerous driving is important. A lot of teens think that they are immune to dangers of distracted driving. Even though they know texting is bad, they don't think they will be victims."

After spending six weeks preparing for the educational program, the nursing students were able to reap the rewards of their labor as the program was a success. More than 250 high school students participated in the program.

Driving distractions are the leading causes of most vehicle crashes and near-crashes, with the help of such informative programs, teenagers are likely to decrease incidents of crashes.