

“Save A Life Tour” Brings Reality of Driving While Intoxicated to Norfolk

Story Number: NNS070613-05 Release Date: 6/13/2007 10:40:00 AM

By Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Kieshia Savage, Fleet Public Affairs Center, Atlantic

NORFOLK (NNS) -- “Watch Out! Whoa! Hurry up and get over! I can’t control the wheel!” These were some of the yells heard as Sailors got a chance to experience what driving while under the influence is like in a drunk-driving simulator during the “Save A Life Tour” at Naval Station Norfolk’s Q-80 gym June 7.

“We show people how alcohol can affect reaction time, motor skills and tunnel vision, and how your brain decides to solve these problems from a sober perspective,” said Brian Beldyga, the senior manager of the Save A Life Tour. “If you can’t do it sober with our help, then how can you do it in the real world after you’ve been drinking?”

The multi-million dollar simulator took center-stage with big screen TVs projecting images of real-life tragedies and the heart-wrenching stories of those left to deal with the aftermath. An open casket, earmarked for the next DUI victim and huge posters with grave messages helped drive home the message.

Sailors who exited the simulator agreed that it gave them a more realistic understanding of what driving intoxicated feels like and an awareness of the fatal dangers in doing so.

“It was weird because your reaction time is delayed a lot and your focus is limited because you wanted to look straight ahead and not anywhere else,” said Aviation Electrician’s Mate 1st Class (AW) Jeremy Jones from the Helicopter Sea Combat Wing U.S. Atlantic Fleet. “This program gives you a better idea and understanding of what happens when people drink and drive because you get the hands-on experience and see real life stories.”

Aviation Machinist’s Mate Airmen Darlene Jordan from Fleet Readiness Center Norfolk talked about her experience in the simulator.

“I felt like I had no control,” said Jordan. “It’s very important for people to come and try out the simulator to see what it’s like driving under the influence because it makes you think you know what you’re doing, but you’re not really doing what you want to do.”

Chief Aviation Electronics Technician (AW) Antonio Lyles from Helicopter Mine Countermeasures (HM) 14 was proud to say none of his Sailors have been involved in a fatal drinking and driving accident, but felt it was important for people to attend the Save A Life Tour.

“When people are driving intoxicated, they don’t realize how they’re actually driving,” said Lyles. “I think this program is important because it gives young Sailors, and everyone, an idea of how they carry themselves and what the effects of driving drunk does to their judgment and mobility.”



070607-N-1688B-044 NORFOLK, Va. (June 7, 2007) - Brian Beldyga, senior manager of the Save a Life Tour, shows that tunnel vision is the most dangerous part of driving while drunk. The Save a Life Tour visited the Q-80 gym onboard Naval Station Norfolk, with a realistic drunk driving simulator to demonstrate the dangers of driving while intoxicated. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Matthew Bookwalter (RELEASED)



According to the Naval Safety Center, 17,000 Americans are killed every year and more than 700,000 are injured in alcohol-related traffic crashes.

“Alcohol gives people liquid courage,” said Beldyga. “There’s no factual data out there that says alcohol gives people the upper hand, it just makes us feel like we have it.”

During the seminar Beldyga also stressed the importance of peer pressure and the notion of friends not letting friends drive drunk by taking the keys to avoid someone from taking a life.

At the end of their simulated experience, participants walked away with rubber bracelets with a message that read, “I’ll Take the Keys.”