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## Save-a-Life Tour visits NSB Kings Bay

By MCSA Dmitry Chepusov, Periscope staff

Through out the holiday season, the Navy had numerous warnings and training sessions for service members regarding drunk driving in response to the high number of DUI related deaths during the past few years. However, nothing drives it home as well as a hands-on experience provided through Edu-tainment, or education through entertainment. The Save-a-Life Tour paid Kings Bay its second annual visit to offer military members a chance to drive in the DUI simulator set up in the MWR Sports Complex Feb. 4 and 5.

"It was seven years ago when I started working for Kramer Entertainment and Bob Kramer came to me with an idea for a drunk driving simulator," said Brian Beldyga, Edu-tainment senior manager. "We worked together to find the most effective way to get the message across of how alcohol effects reaction time and causes drunk drivers to crash."

Beldyga spent several years perfecting his approach by exploring the psychology of youths who are prone to driving while intoxicated. His team designed the Save-a-Life Tour to visit high schools and colleges and has only recently set its sights on military installations.

Besides having the most advanced drunk driving simulator, the Save-a-Life crew uses props such as a full sized casket, large graphic posters, videos detailing fatal DUI accounts, and information for local Alcoholics Anonymous and similar services. In addition, there are several projection screens with first and third person views of the ongoing simulation.

The simulator itself looks and feels like a real vehicle, complete with a seatbelt, adjustable seat, tilting steering wheel, headlight switch, ignition key, turn signal, and even an MP3 player loaded with all the good driving music one can wish for. What makes the simulator even more realistic is the delay in the steering, gas and brakes to mimic the delay in reaction time caused by alcohol inhibiting brain signals after an evening of moderate to heavy drinking.

"We never tell the driver how many drinks the simulator had," said Beldyga. "If we were to tell someone they are simulating driving under the influence of six beers, that individual might drink four beers and think that is okay to drive. I won't risk driving even after one drink if there is an alternative, and there is always an alternative to driving after alcohol consumption."

After having one or two drinks, most people will feel mildly relaxed and maybe a little lightheaded, but what they won't be able to notice is that their reaction time and decision-making skills are impaired. The Drunk Driving Simulator demonstrates the dangerous effects of even mildly latent reaction times, forcing the driver to develop tunnel vision in an attempt to not swerve on the road.

**"Today I learned that drinking alcohol severely slows down your reaction time," said MTSA Bobby Hesson. "I drove the simulator and went into tunnel vision mode, where my peripheral vision was shut off. Brian told me to make a right turn and I did not realize that I was turning the wrong way on a one way street. I definitely recommend this simulation to others. When I was younger I did not think too much about drunk driving. This is a great way to know what the risks are. It keeps us from learning the effects of driving drunk the hard way."**

The Save-a-life Tour will likely be back to Kings Bay next year, but they have a long drive ahead of them, making stops all across the nation. According to Beldyga, Kramer Entertainment already has three teams with plans for a fourth team to meet the large demand for their unique simulator teams. They are booked solid until 2010 in their continuing effort to spread the facts about the dangers of drunk driving.



Edu-tainment Senior Manager Brian Beldyga talks to many groups of junior Sailors while providing them the opportunity to take part in the Drunk Driving Simulator during Kings Bay's annual Save a Life Tour visit Feb. 4 and 5. The Drunk Driving Simulator demonstrates the dangerous effects of mildly latent reaction times, forcing the driver to develop tunnel vision when attempting to not swerve on the road. MCSN Dmitry Chepusov