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Florida State U. risk management seminar shows consequences of poor decisions

By Lauren Walleser

The Panhellenic Association and the Interfraternity Council (IFC) at Florida State University hosted a risk management seminar called Street Smarts, sponsored by Florida Stay Alive Through Education (SAFE) and Tri Eagle Sales, Wednesday, Jan. 24 and Thursday, Jan. 25 in Ruby Diamond Auditorium. About 1,500 students, mostly fraternity and sorority members, attended the presentation and video on seatbelt safety and drunk driving.

Sara King, vice president of executive affairs for the Panhellenic Association, organized the event along with Executive Vice President for the Interfraternity Council Justen Calvacca. King said she remembered the presentation from her freshman year and wanted to bring it back to impact more students.

"We wanted to try to hit something that we think is going to impact our members and something that is effective on our campus whenever they leave, because risk management can be a whole bunch of things," said King. "It can be self defense, it can be hazing, it can be drugs, alcohol, so many things, and we wanted to hit something we think our new members will use outside just this arena."

King explained that Panhellenic and IFC have certain bylaws and a constitution that they must follow. Part of the rules state that new sorority and fraternity members must attend a risk management seminar in the fall and 20 percent of each chapter must attend the seminar in the spring. Every year the presentation differs, but the message is usually the same.

"I was talking to some of the leaders that present this, and they say that whenever they go to scenes, that some of the people that have been in car accidents wear their seat belts and afterward they're walking around and doing great and it's because they've seen this presentation and it had an impact on them," King said.

The Street Smarts program was led by Jereme Cadorette, an Orlando, Fla., firefighter, and

Kirsten Sbela, a Tallahassee (Fla.) Memorial Hospital paramedic. They told stories about college-age kids who made bad decisions while under the influence and ended up losing their lives. They also showed a slide show of graphic photos from fatal car crashes. Panhellenic and IFC provided refreshments for students who became nauseated by the video, and students were told they could cover their eyes or excuse themselves if they felt sick or disturbed by the presentation. "It's kind of a 'shock and awe' video," said Calvacca. "It's real graphic and intense. They show pictures of crashes, scenes, body parts. It's real. It really hits home. A lot of people last night left in the middle of the presentation."

Calvacca said he believed this type of presentation is the best way to reach people.

"You get nothing out of being subtle," said Calvacca. "This kind of thing has got to kind of scare people straight. I guarantee you when this presentation stops, you won't keep your eyes off of it. It grabs you by the horns."

Calvacca also shared why he thought risk management presentations were important, especially for fraternities and sororities.

"It's important for the general student body, but for Greek Life especially there's a lot of partying and drinking," said Calvacca. Cadorette explained during the presentation that there are three types of calls they normally respond to: fire calls, medical calls and trauma calls. He defined trauma as "any sudden, unexpected violent insult or injury to the human body." This could include shootings, stabbings, falls, burns, electrocutions, animal attacks, and car crashes. He said that trauma calls are most common with people between the ages of 5 and 35, but most people who die from trauma are

between the ages of 12 and 24, and drugs and alcohol usually plays a part.

"The fact of the matter is that most of the time when I pull a dead body out of a car, they're about your age, drugs and alcohol were involved, and they didn't have a seatbelt on," Cadorette said. "Sounds pretty preventable? That's because it is."

Cadorette and Sbela talked about how drugs and alcohol affect overall judgment. Sbela shared two stories, one about a young woman who dove into the bottom of an Olympic-sized pool when it had no water in it and another about a young man who was playing football on the roof of an 11-story hotel and fell off as he was trying to receive a pass. Both people were under the influence and died because their judgment was impaired. The presenters also debunked some myths about seatbelt safety. They said that most students say they don't wear their seat belts because they are good drivers, have large vehicles, or don't want to wrinkle their clothes. Many people also don't wear their seatbelt if they are just going around the corner.

"Most traffic fatalities happen in a close proximity to your home at speeds less than 35 miles per hour," Cadorette said.

Cadorette also explained that air bags do not protect drivers and passengers from secondary crashes, which may occur after the initial impact. He also said people in the back seat need to wear a seatbelt as well, because in a crash their teeth can hit the heads of the people in front, as has happened before, and all passengers can die from head injuries.

Sbela explained that if a car catches on fire, the driver and passengers would have more than enough time to escape, even if they are wearing their seat belts. Also, if a roll over occurs, doors and windows aren't enough to keep a body inside.

"If you are ejected, you have a 25 times greater chance that you're going to die," Cadorette said.

The two then demonstrated what would happen to someone if they were in a car accident and not wearing their seatbelt. Using a volunteer from the audience, Cadorette and Sbela explained the injuries the student would have incurred in graphic detail, how they would have to cut him out of the car and all of the emergency room procedures that would be performed on him while still awake and feeling the pain. They strapped the student to a stretcher and poked and prodded him to make their point.

The presentation began at 6:30 p.m. and lasted for about 70 minutes. Some students were upset by the graphic images and did excuse themselves.

According to Cadorette, someone dies in a car crash in the United States every 12 minutes. That means that even during the presentation, several lives were lost.

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