

Driving home the danger of alcohol

By Beth Ashton
special writer

Police sirens scream in the night as the cruisers rush to the scene of an accident. Mangled cars, a road covered with skids, and injured, possibly dead, victims lay on the pavement. The cause of this accident, as well as thousands of others: drunk driving.

THIS WAS one of the many pictures painted into the minds of Rochester Adams High students Friday morning in an assembly sponsored by the school's Student Council. The hour-long assembly was a special presentation given by Robert Anastas, founder/executive director of SADD (Students Against Drunk Driving). Anastas, also a counselor, coach, and teacher at a high school in Marlboro, Mass., graduated from the University of Michigan, then went on to Worcester State College, Worcester, Mass., to further his education.

After becoming a teacher and experiencing the deaths of two of his students because of drunk driving-related accidents, he founded the SADD program and went on a nationwide campaign to increase the awareness of students about drunk driving.

He has already spoken at 6,000 high schools throughout the nation concerning this problem.

HIS PRESENTATION during the Adams stop was informative and humorous, as well as frightening.

"It made you feel 'scared straight' because of the kids he used as examples. They all seemed to have their lives going great until they got into that car drunk; then it was over," sophomore Chris Foster said.

Beginning with the statistic that every hour one teen-ager, age 16-19, is killed in a drunk driving-related accident, Anastas went on to say, "You kids just don't care. Perhaps that's because that one kid on your way to school is not real to you. It's not someone you know, it's not one of your friends who lives just down the street, but it could be. In the next hour, that kid will, indeed, become real to you."

"I think a lot of people look at it seriously because of the way he presented the problem," Junior Maria Capaldi said. "He made you realize that it could be you, or one of your friends, dying that hour. You never know unless you do something to prevent it." Anastas' presentation is different than most. He doesn't brood over statistics or preach to students.

"I'M NOT going to tell you about all of the technicalities of drinking and driving. I'm not going to tell you that you'll get cirrhosis of the liver or that you kill brain cells with every drink that you take, because you know all of that. I'm not going to tell you about the SADD program, and what it stands for," he said.

"What I am going to do, is talk about death and dying, because I believe that death has been camouflaged to you in two ways. One, lack of communication, and two, peer pressure. Look at these reasons and watch, just watch, the death trap that you fall into."

"I once knew a kid, he was the co-captain of the varsity football team I coached. All he had to do was finish high school, and he'd get a \$40,000 scholarship to the college of his choice. He had everything."

"But one night he went to a party and got a little drunk. Later, he realized that he was late, and he had to get home. He didn't call his parents, and those kids that he called his friends let him drive home."

"He tried to make it, going 75 miles per hour all the way home. When he was 100 yards away from his house, he hit a fog bank. Through that fog bank he went, not bothering to slow down. When he got to the end of that fog bank, he found a tree, and he hit it square on, at 75 miles per hour."

"Have you ever seen the effects of a crash like that?" Anastas asked. "The impact snapped his neck in half and he died instantly."

"Kids, once you're dead at 17, you're dead — there's no coming back."

ANASTAS CONTINUED: "You know what I saw after I heard he was dead?"

"I saw all of you kids marching in mourning of your friend's death. I saw all of you guys asking, 'How could you have done this to me?' I saw you girls in your white dresses, carrying red roses, wondering what went wrong."

"Do you know what I wanted to say? I wanted to tell you all to take your roses and leave. It was your fault; you let him die because you let him drive."

"Not a person alive can tell me that you kids don't care, that you don't love each other. So how can you let this happen?"

Anastas went on to say that the word "friend" is the most confused word in the dictionary. "In our teen-ager lives, we have three classifications of people — strangers, acquaintances, and the people we're intimate with (our true friends)," he said.

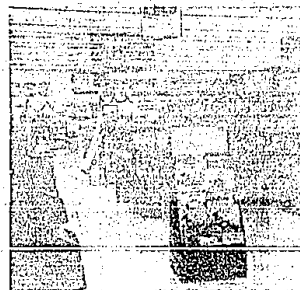
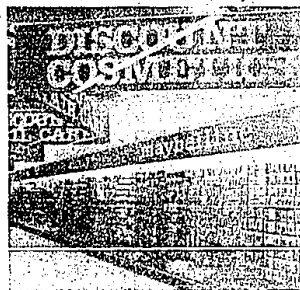
"At age five, all of you kids were intimate with your parents. You came home everyday with detailed stories of your day at school, what all of your friends said and did, and so on. This is the image your parents see, even now that you're in high school."

BUT, IN reality, Anastas said, "Now that you're in high school, most of your parents have slipped out the spot of being intimate, all the way out to being strangers. They don't really know the world that you live in. They don't know the things you do at parties, and they certainly don't know all of the weirdness that you know."

"Teen-agers play the biggest games with their parents, and they don't even realize it, Anastas said.

"You kids tell your parents exactly what they want to hear, which is, most of the time, exactly far from the truth. You let them meet only those friends who they'd approve of, and your parents, in turn, think 'Oh, what a nice child we have raised.' They think that you haven't changed since kindergarten, when, in actuality, they are raising some of the biggest liars around," Anastas said.

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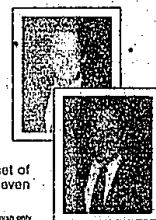


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