

“Every 15 Minutes”

In January of 2010 the staff at Smith Mortuary had a great opportunity to help partner with the city of Derby, Derby Senior High School, the Derby Police Department, the Derby Fire Department, and Derby Emergency Services. We helped to organize and participate in an anti drinking and driving campaign for our community. The program was entitled “Every 15 Minutes”.

Every 15 minutes a person dies as a result of an alcohol related accident. The program was set up to be presented to the student body at Derby High School, and was designed to replicate a party that took place with under age drinking and a mock accident scene that occurred after the party concluded, and finally the aftermath of how the accident scene would look. The mock accident was designed to give the students a reminder of the dangers of driving while impaired by alcohol. We worked with police officer Brian Norris from the Derby Police Department to help coordinate the event. Brian is the student resource officer at Derby Senior High School.

The Derby Senior High School drama department and SADD (Student Against Drunk Driving) provided students who participated in a mock party. The party was video taped and shown during lunch on April 15, 2010. It included all the elements of a high school party with underage drinking and ended by having a group of students leave in an automobile after having consumed alcohol. After the students finished watching the video, the entire student body walked outside to witness a mock accident scene that had the illusion of taking place following the party they had just watched. The mock scene consisted of two wrecked vehicles and several injured teens including two fatalities. The fire department was on hand to assist the police department as well as the local Emergency Ambulance. A Helicopter Air Ambulance landed in the field nearby and evacuated one of the injured teens. We assisted in coordinating the parties involved and provided our facility a ½ mile away from the high school to stage the awaiting responders. Our staff at the funeral home helped to cue each participant to respond to the scene. We were in communication with Officer Norris at the scene. We wanted the police to arrive first and make an arrest and then call for the Emergency Services to attend to the injured teens. The fire department and air ambulance helicopter were sent next to assist with evacuation of the injured teens. After police, fire, emergency services and helicopter had responded, we arrived to make the removal of two deceased teens. Three of our staff, Steven Hernandez, Abby Finley, and Justin Smith arrived at the mock scene and made the removals from the scene in front of the entire student body of the high school.

Over 2000 students were in attendance to witness the tremendous aftermath and chaos of a replicated accident scene. The local television stations from our area as well as the newspaper were also in attendance. The entire event was video taped and replayed the next day during the students lunch period. The event was a tremendous success and did an amazing job of showing the students the perils of drinking and driving. We received an outpouring of positive feedback from the school and the entire community

for our coordination and involvement in the mock event. We had been involved in providing our staff and funeral coach for similar events in the past but never to this magnitude. The “Every 15 Minutes” program gave our staff a great sense of reward. The planning and participating in this successful event was a great way to show students, parents and the entire community our commitment to helping make a safer environment for our high school students.