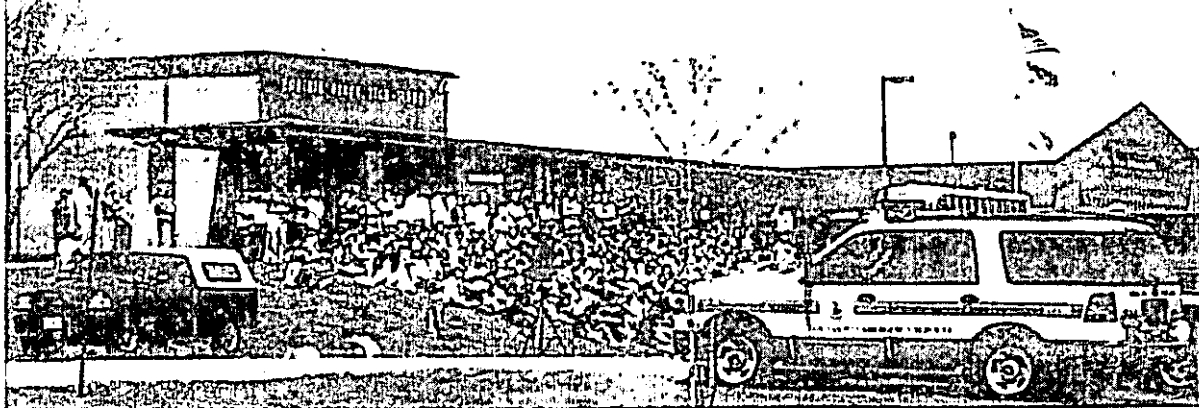# A crash ooo

desperate cries

for help ooo

and a lesson learned

Event teaches hard truths about drunken driving

By Jacob Owens
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Emergency responders rushed to a grisly two-car "crash" in the parking lot of Bohemia Manor High School on Friday afternoon.

A head-on collision between the two cars claimed the lives of three teenagers as distressed onlookers and relatives clamored to find information.

Fortunately, the scene was a staged demonstration and the wounds were no more than red dye and ketchup.

But the message was real.

"You need to be responsible when behind the wheel, because we all share the roads of our county," said Richard Brooks, the county's director of emergency services. "When you drink or use drugs and proceed to drive, there will be consequences."

County Commissioner Wayne Tome, who also serves as the EMS chief for Port Deposit's Water Witch Fire Co., was on hand to start the demonstration and address the high school students.

"We have a problem with youth drinking and using drugs in this county and in the state, and we don't want you to add

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to it," Tome said. "Kids who drink or use drugs most likely won't think twice about doing so and then driving under the influence."

For nearly 40 minutes, fire companies from Chesapeake City, Cecilton, Earleville and Elkton joined with sheriff's deputies to show students what typically happens at a crash scene.

A fire chief's truck followed by emergency services trucks, fire rescue trucks and ambulances were the first to arrive.

"The fire chief will start to establish the priority of the victim's injuries while backup arrives," Brooks said. "If the injuries look critical enough, he will call the state police barrack for a medivac helicopter for transport to Shock Trauma. I would never reduce someone's life to a dollar amount, but you need to understand the amount of money involved in containing and aiding crash victims."

As rescue crews worked to help survivors of the crash, friends and parents began arriving.

"In today's day and age, victims often text their friends for help after 911," Brooks said. "In a small community like Cecil County, it doesn't take a lot of effort to get the parents of a victim to a crash scene."

Police and fire rescue volunteers often have to restrain hysterical family members and friends looking to identify their friends or children.

"Many times our firefighters also know the deceased and even though they try extremely hard to save all of the victims, sometimes they can't," Brooks said. "Imagine how hard it is for that firefighter, because usually after an event like this there isn't very much sleep."

For Debbie Hardy of Conowingo, the demonstration brought up a lot of emotions.

Her 13-year-old daughter, Janet Marie, was killed in October 2003 when a drunk driver struck a car in which she was a passenger. At the time, Janet was a freshman at Perryville High School, who dreamed of becoming a zoologist at the Baltimore Zoo.

"This may have been pretend, but it happens every single day; it is real," Hardy said. "I wasn't even able to function for about eight months after the crash and only in talking about that day and sharing my experience do I cope."

Bo Manor senior Bryanna Bolton said Hardy's tale and the demonstration made an impression on her.

"It is really crazy to see this kind of thing happen to people you know, even if it wasn't real," Bolton said. "(Hardy) really hit home for me; No one is really exempt from (the) actions (of drunk drivers)."

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CECIL WHIG PHOTOS BY ADELMA GREGORY-BUNNELL

Top, a state police medevac helicopter flies above a crowd of Bohemia Manor students Friday during a mock car crash aimed at teaching the dangers of drinking and driving. Above, county emergency personnel work to free the "victims" of the mock crash.

'Accident' aims to prevent drunk driving on prom night

By BOBBY MCMAHON
Staff Writer

. CENTREVILLE — The scene is gruesome. Two cars are smashed together, with shattered glass and twisted steel scattered around. Grieving friends and parents wail and sob at the sight, and one girl, no older than 18, is led away in handcuffs wearing her prom dress.

A group of firefighters hurries to free the bloodied victims from the wreckage. While several will survive or make it into an ambulance, two will be taken away in a hearse.

But the scene isn't real. The "victims" are all student actors at Queen Anne's County High School, and the gaping wounds and compound fractures they wear are the result of some convincing stage makeup rather than horrific injuries. Plus, there's a crowd of juniors and seniors looking on at the scene, some in rapt attention, others talking with their friends.

The mock accident demonstration, held Tuesday, April 27 in the school's parking lot, is part of the annual "Prom Promise" campaign to remind students of the dangers of drinking and driving (as well as other so-called "destructive decisions") in the days before prom.

The demonstration vividly creates the scene of a savage drunk-driving accident on prom night. Firefighters cut the top off the smashed minivan one group of students were riding in, and an "injured" student is taken away in a STAT Med Evac helicopter standing by.

Queen Anne's County Sheriff R. G. Hofmann said the demonstration aims to show students how a poor decision like drinking and driving can have a lasting impact on the whole community. He hoped students left the

Firefighters from several area departments could be seen working at the scene with police from the sheriff's office and Centreville Town Police looking on. Ambulance crews from the Queen Anne's County Department of Emergency Services were also on hand, as were funeral directors from Fellows, Helfenbein and Newnam funeral home.

In their roles as the blood-splattered victims, the student actors are involved with the organization Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD). They agreed that many students don't think an accident like this can happen to them, and that the demonstration will be a success if it keeps at least one student from drinking and driving.

Senior Becca Palmer, who spent most of the demonstration lying under a sheet on the hood of the minivan, said she was involved because she wouldn't want one of her friends to go through something like this.

"It's not worth it to have a drink," Palmer said.

demonstration knowing that this can happen to them.

"It's a reality," Hofmann said. "It's something that can happen in a split second to any of our children."

In particular, Hofmann sees social hosting (where parents allow young people to drink in their homes) as "a very big county problem." He said that, even in that environment, young people still find a way to get behind the wheel of a car.

The demonstration was a collaborative effort between a host of different organizations.

PHOTO BY BOBBY MCMAHON

Student actors pose in their horrific crash make-up after a Prom Promise mock accident demonstration at Queen Anne's County High School on April 27. The students are (left to right): Brittany Sable, Nikka Breighner, Amanda Kloetzli, Katie Lane, Ryan Richeson, Becca Palmer and Ethan Jamison.
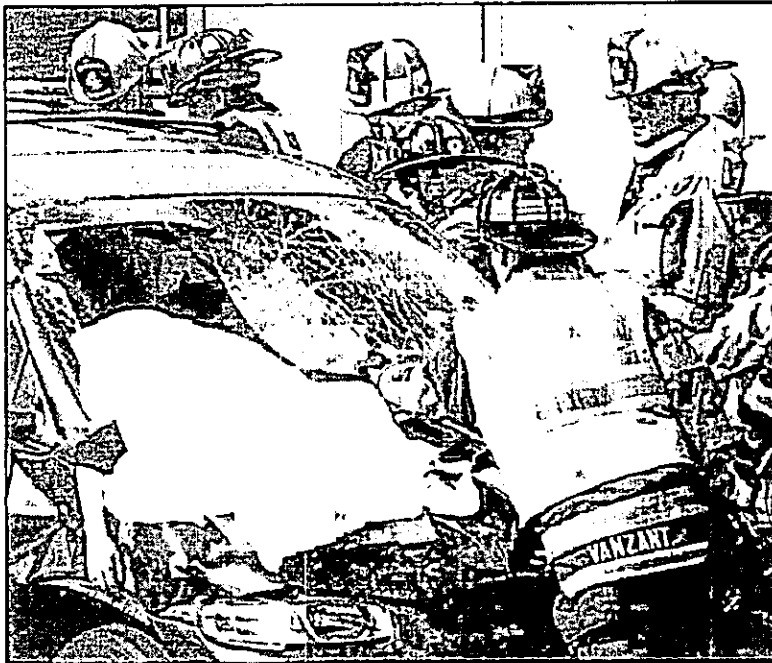

PHOTOS BY BOBBY MCMAHON

Queen Anne's County High School students look on during a mock accident demonstration at Queen Anne's County High School on April 27. The demonstration, a collaborative effort among students, faculty, volunteer fire departments and county officials, is part of the annual "Prom Promise" campaign to remind students of the dangers of drinking and driving in the days before prom.

Firefighters work to free a trapped student as another lies "dead" on the hood during a mock accident demonstration at Queen Anne's County High School on April 27. The demonstration, a collaborative effort among students, faculty, volunteer fire departments and county officials, is part of the annual "Prom Promise" campaign to remind students of the dangers of drinking and driving in the days before prom.