

St. Andrews Students Drink for a Cause

Six beers in an hour and a half were enough to make Rob Perron tipsy. Teri Beasley drank four and a half screwdrivers in the same time and was equally intoxicated. But were they too drunk to drive?

"Yes," said students who witnessed the performance during a controlled drinking experiment at the Belk Center last week.

The demonstration, organized as part of National Collegiate Alcohol Awareness Week, was conducted by North Carolina Highway Patrol Sergeant Ralph Medlin. The two students, both 21, volunteered for the test. Age 21 is the legal drinking age in all 50 states.

"Alcohol is a depressant, not a stimulant. It slows everything down," Sgt. Medlin said, explaining why Perron and Beasley had difficulty following directions and accomplishing the standard field sobriety tests.

Both managed to tilt their heads back, close their eyes and touch their noses, but they couldn't do it without deliberate effort. Nor could they do it without swaying noticeably.

The two struggled through the heel-to-toe walk and failed to count their steps out loud, as instructed. Their speech was slightly slurred, and they had some difficulty expressing their thoughts.

As further confirmation of their impairment, Perron and Beasley took two blood alcohol tests apiece, 75 minutes and 140 minutes after they began drinking. The results were in the .05 to .07 percent range, just below the legal limit of .08 percent for blood alcohol content.

When Sgt. Medlin asked the audience whether the two were too drunk to drive, all agreed

that they were. And, based on their behavior and the field sobriety tests, both would have been arrested, Medlin added, possibly for reckless driving, if not for driving while impaired.

Conviction for DWI means loss of license for one year, stiff fines, jail or probation, and a 400-percent increase in insurance rates. Anyone under 21 who is caught driving with any amount of alcohol in their system also will lose their license for a year.

North Carolina's recently revised open container law also states that the driver, regardless of age, must be completely alcohol-free if a passenger has an open container of beer in the car. Under no circumstances are open liquor containers permissible in the passenger compartment.

During the event, students watched several Patrol videotapes of fatal accident scenes. The wrecks were caused by drunk drivers and, in some cases, only scrap metal remained of the vehicles.

"When you think about getting in that car with a person who's been drinking," Sgt. Medlin said, "it's like playing Russian roulette, except you're letting them cock the gun and put it to your head."

He empathized with young people's desire to have fun, but warned of the dangers, too. "I haven't always been 39. I didn't skip 18, 19, 20 and 21, so I know how easy it is to go along with the crowd. It's all about common sense and how much value you put on your life," he said.

THE WALL

What Do You Think About The World Series?

"Did the Braves win?"

-Isaac Coleman

"I think it's wonderful. My grandfather would have loved it; he was a die-hard Braves fan."

-Stephen Moody

"I'm not a baseball fan..."

-Walter Steele

"I loved it. It was their time to win. Justice was served."

-George Hall

"It was pretty good. I'm a big Red Socks fan. Since the Red Socks didn't play, then they didn't lose."

-Shin Nohara