



Whittier Union HIGH SCHOOL DISTRICT

To Achieve and Maintain Excellence...

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 8, 2022 **CONTACT:** Andrea Garcia **PHONE:** 909-273-9840

Santa Fe High School Stages ‘Every 15 Minutes,’ Displays Dangers of Impaired Driving

WHITTIER – Students from Santa Fe High School witnessed the real-life consequences of driving under the influence during the school’s “Every 15 Minutes” program, which featured a simulated car crash that claimed the lives of their peers, an overnight retreat and a mock funeral.

The event, held April 6-7, included a pre-recorded 9-1-1 call that triggered an emergency response by local law enforcement agencies, firefighters and paramedics. Students were classified as “critically and fatally wounded” during the staged crash and transported via ambulance to a local hospital. As part of the simulation, an “injured” student was arrested for drunken driving.

“I thought the event was very impactful,” Santa Fe senior and Associated Student Body (ASB) vice-president Elizabeth Salgado said. “It brought very strong emotions. I had a little idea of what would happen but seeing it up close was an unsettling experience. The lesson is to always think twice before you make a decision. There is always someone who can help. Call them before a tragedy occurs.”

Throughout the first day of events, a “Grim Reaper” visited classrooms every 15 minutes and selected students to be a part of the “living dead.” These students represented the numbers of lives lost in alcohol-related collisions. Participants took part in an overnight retreat without contact with family or friends. During the retreat, students felt the impact of drunken driving as they heard emotional stories from people involved in or affected by the issue and wrote letters to their loved ones.

Santa Fe High ASB president Chloe Blackburn was a sophomore when the school staged an “Every 15 Minutes” event in 2019. After the event, Blackburn remembers being in class and hearing a loud knock on the door, announcing the arrival of the Grim Reaper. The classmate sitting next to her was taken away. Though just a simulation, it was a chilling moment for her.

“Because of ‘Every 15 Minutes,’ I am 100% certain I am going to be careful about who I get in a car with,” Blackburn said. “This event is one of the reasons I love Santa Fe High and am part of ASB. Santa Fe works so hard to make us better students, whether through lunchtime activities or dances but also through these events that can save lives. It has helped motivate my peers and I to be better people.”

A mock funeral was staged inside the school’s gymnasium the following day, during which parents of the “living dead” shared the emotional toll they felt in losing their child – even for just one day.

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Students, parents, teachers and staff also watched a video that recapped the previous day's event and heard from Chelsie Hill, founder of the wheelchair dance team Rollettes. Hill discussed her tragic, true story of being involved in a drunken driving accident and suffering a spinal cord injury that resulted in paralysis from her waist down at just 17 years old.

The two-day program was held in partnership with the City of Santa Fe Springs; participants included the Whittier Police Department, Santa Fe Springs Fire Rescue, Mercy Air and the California Highway Patrol.

The "Every 15 Minutes" program is a national campaign which focuses on high school junior and seniors and aims to challenge students to think about the dangers of drunken driving. The campaign also encourages students to think about the impact their decisions can have on their family, friends and community.

"We know our students will face tough challenges and we are hoping this is not one of them. If we can save just one life in this process, that is enough for us," Campbell said. "Our students matter to us. We see them every day, greet them, say hi, but what is most important is they learn from these experiences and use them throughout their lifetime. 'Every 15 Minutes' is one way to ensure that Santa Fe Chieftains will grow to be valuable and contributing members of the community, and our future leaders."

PHOTO CAPTIONS

WUHSD_15MINUTES1: A "Grim Reaper" stands beside a simulated car crash that displayed the dangers of impaired driving during Santa Fe High School's "Every 15 Minutes" program on April 6.

WUHSD_15MINUTES2: A Santa Fe High School student sits on the sidewalk after taking part in the school's "Every 15 Minutes" live simulated car crash on April 6.

WUHSD_15MINUTES3: A group of Santa Fe High School students take part of the "living dead" during the school's "Every 15 Minutes" program on April 6. "Living dead" students represented the number of lives lost in alcohol-related collisions.

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OUR MISSION:

The Whittier Union High School District provides all students with an engaging, quality standards-based instructional program delivered by a well-trained staff resulting in improved student achievement. Whittier Union High School District works to achieve and maintain excellence in providing a comprehensive education for all students.

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