

Ensuring Safe Celebrations to Avoid the Worst

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Many of us are impatient for spring to arrive, but no one is as impatient as those youths who will complete their secondary studies and celebrate their graduation by way of a high school ball.

Yet, it's also a period during when tragic events occur as a result of the recklessness of young drivers when alcohol is involved. Because of this, the Sainte-Agathe-des-Monts Optimist Club and the Val-David/Val-Morin Optimist Club have joined forces to implement an awareness campaign known as "Let's Party Safely". "Let's Party Safely" is held both inside and outside of a high school and involves the enactment of various scenes by youths from the school. It has been presented to over 300 youths to date and is in its fifth edition in 2015.

Actors come from different groups of youths and take part in simulating a graduation ball. Over an entire morning, spectators witness a scene depicting a group of youths, a camp fire, and a typical evening during which these youths drink alcohol and then get into their cars. The next scene takes us outdoors and depicts the tragedy surrounding a car crash due to drinking and driving. An actress was ejected from her car and is now lying in a pool of blood while we witness the distress of this character's friends as they are confronted by such tragedy. Real firefighters, police officers and paramedics join by arriving on the scene of the tragedy. The final scene takes us inside the school where we see a casket surrounded by the victim's friends, portraying the grief the victim's family and friends would be experiencing.

Not only does this activity allow youths to take part directly as actors, it also gives them a voice to share their views and feelings during the activity. It's a method that really raises the awareness of youths by reducing the distance between truth and fiction. The very realistic scenes, real damaged cars, a casket borrowed from a funeral home, as well as real paramedics, police officers and fire fighters, create a shock effect through their raw realism. The testimony of a victim of a real car crash caused by alcohol also adds weight to the reality of the danger youths face during their quest for excitement.

The activity requires several weeks of preparation and begins towards the end of winter. It is presented around the month of May to stick in the minds of graduates prior to their graduation. There is no fee to implement this activity and Optimist Clubs have always benefitted from great visibility via the local media.

