

Project Results

The *Drive 2 Stay Alive* project at Eureka Senior High School has made a significant impact on the student body and on our community at large. Eureka High is the largest high school in Humboldt County and the school population is approximately 1400 students. Our goals are to improve driver safety on our campus.

Project activities directly impacted more than 1400 students at Eureka High School. Students designed posters, wrote personal stories about car crashes, participated in interactive driving simulations and a school-wide assembly, created educational displays, developed a safe driving proclamation adopted by the Humboldt County Board of Supervisors, and participated in presentations focused on safe driving. *Drive 2 Stay Alive* increased awareness on the campus and around the community about the dangers of distracted and impaired driving. Our efforts were underscored by two serious crashes in our area. However, research conducted through a partnership with Public Health confirmed that real, measurable changes also occurred as a result of the project.

Seat belt surveys were conducted on the school grounds in September 2008 and then again in December 2008. At both times we observed students as they arrived on campus in the morning and again as they left at the end of the school day. In September the seat belt use rate in the morning was 90.2% and the seat belt use rate in the afternoon was 92.1%. In December the seat belt use rate increased to 95.8% in the morning and to 97.1% in the afternoon. Over 750 students were observed during these observations. In both the morning and afternoon observations we saw the seat belt use rate increase by more than 5% over the course of this project.

Drive 2 Stay Alive was determined to move beyond anecdotal evidence to provide measurable data that demonstrated the effects of impaired and distracted driving. The Eureka Police Department, City of Eureka, Humboldt Driving School, Humboldt County Public Health and Eureka City Schools supported students in implementing a two-day driving simulation experiment. The experiment involved twelve drivers who completed a closed-course road test. The first time they drove the course free of impairments and distractions. The second time they drove the course while wearing *Fatal Vision* goggles to simulate driving under the influence of alcohol. The third time they drove the course while making a call on a cell phone, changing the music CD, and drinking a bottle of water. The results demonstrated the danger of driving while distracted or impaired. Drivers hit 29 cones while driving free of impairments, 99 cones while driving under the influence, and 60 cones while driving distracted. Three times as many cones were struck when drivers were impaired by alcohol and twice as many cones were struck when drivers were impaired by distractions. The results clearly demonstrated to the students of Eureka High School and the community-at-large that driving while distracted or impaired will affect your ability to drive safely. *Drive 2 Stay Alive* plans to use these results in the future for public service announcements that will air on local television stations.

The *Drive 2 Stay Alive* project was recognized multiple times by local media outlets and by the City of Eureka. There were three news articles in the Eureka Reporter (a daily newspaper), two news articles in the Eureka Times-Standard (a daily newspaper), and two news stories compiled by KIEM News Channel 3 (a daily news broadcast). The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors signed a proclamation in support of these efforts. The ultimate measure of our success is the increased awareness among our entire student body about the importance of driving safely.