

Alcohol awareness rallies to bottle DWI behavior

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Monitor Staff

Army Community Service in conjunction with the Army Substance Abuse Program, William Beaumont Army Medical Center and various agencies in the city of El Paso hosted an alcohol awareness rally Friday at the Fort Bliss Air Defense Artillery Museum and Study Center.

The rally's purpose was education and prevention of driving while under the influence of alcohol. In 2004, 30 percent of all fatal crashes during a weekday were alcohol-related, compared to 51 percent on weekends. For all crashes, the alcohol involvement rate was 5 percent during the week and 12 percent during the weekend, according to MADD.org.

Sgt. Jamara Cromwell, noncommissioned officer in charge of traffic investigation, 72nd Military Police Detachment, said the goal was to educate Soldiers on the importance of not drinking and driving and understanding the effects it causes, especially being in the military. It could cost them their career or somebody's life.

"I think this is an educational event," said Cromwell. "The more education we provide to Soldiers here, the more they will get out of it. [We are] educating them on the risks ... of alcohol, especially when it comes to



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Pfc. Jerald Watts, A Battery, 2nd Battalion, 43rd Air Defense Artillery, attempts to steer the simulated impaired driving experience car. While driving the SIDNE car, Watts had to opportunity to experience what it feels like to drive a car under the influence of alcohol.

vehicles, and give them an understanding what can happen to them when they get caught drinking and driving."

The rally also provided a forum for those who have been affected by drunk drivers a chance to educate Soldiers and explain to them this is a real problem. Ulises Sandoval, DWI victim, spoke to Soldiers, family members and children about losing his two sons to a drunk driver.

"It is important to get the message out about drinking and driving," said Sandoval. "The people who [drank]

and [drove] and killed my two sons used to take some classes on drinking and driving. He never got the message. At [Mothers against Drunk Driving], we are targeting the kids, so they understand more [about] the pain and suffering of somebody who lost a son or daughter like me."

Sandoval also said drunk driving not only affects the family it also affects the community, friends and property.

Robert Guile, ASEP prevention coordinator, said they wanted to get the word out about DWI and educate

Soldiers on prevention initiatives which will keep Fort Bliss from being a part of drunken driving statistics. Guile concurred with Cromwell and Sandoval on the importance of having an alcohol awareness rally.

"I think things like this helps Soldiers," said Guile. "It is about education and letting Soldiers understand not only the physical effects and mental effects of alcohol or substance abuse, but the consequences of its use, as well as DWI crashes. Let them know these types of consequences are real."

Cromwell said he hopes these types of rallies are not needed in the future.

"I hope this makes a difference with Soldiers on Fort Bliss," said Cromwell. "We have so many [driving under the influence] apprehensions and we are hoping to cut the cost down, so we don't have to do this anymore."

Guile said turnout for the event was better than expected, and he wants everyone to know prevention is not just other people getting involved.

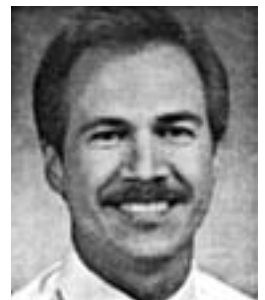
"My adage is ... I take care of myself, and I take care of everybody around me," said Guile. "That is what we are trying to get out to the Soldiers. When they take care of themselves, they take care of everybody around them."



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