

dnt txt n drv

Simulator helps students get message about texting and driving

SPECIAL
THE ENTERPRISE

"dnt txt n drv" or "don't text and drive" was the message Springlake-Earth High School students received Jan. 20 as they experienced the dangers in a texting and driving simulator.

Family, Career and Community Leaders of America as well as the SUMMIT team hosted the virtual reality experience, sponsored by PEER Awareness. It gave students the opportunity to participate in the dangerous practice of texting and driving without the deadly consequences.

Upon entering the Ag shop at the high school, students were directed to a video showing families who had lost family members to texting drivers. Included in the video was the Brown family from Seagraves, who lost their daughter Alex in a texting-and-driving collision. Another story included a 19-year-old Colorado student whose choice to text and drive resulted in killing two scientists carpooling to work. The teenager served time in jail for negligent homicide and was required, as part of his sentence, to speak to schools about his experience.

The incident later led to a law in Colorado sentencing texting drivers to up to 15 years in prison if their actions end in a driving fatality.

"We are trying to help our peers make educated, positive choices," FCCLA Peer Educator Stephanie Acevedo said. "We wanted to get the simulator so they could experience how easily they can be distracted and how serious the results could be."

Acevedo spoke at the Jan. 12 SUMMIT on the topic of distracted driving. Her efforts resulted in more than 30 students pledging to "keep their hands on the wheel" by placing their own hand-prints on a giant steering wheel that was later hung in the school hallway as a daily reminder. Acevedo will be continuing her safe driving education through a Project Ignition grant awarded by the National Youth Leadership Council and funded by State Farm Insurance, as well as a grant from SAVE (Students Against Violence Everywhere) funded by Allstate Insurance and a service-learning grant awarded by Serve and Learn Texas.

"The simulator was a lot of fun," sophomore Melanie Garcia said. "But it was really



Submitted Photo

Samantha Herriage, a Springlake-Earth High School sophomore, participates in a texting and driving virtual reality simulator last week. Students experienced the dangers of texting while driving without the deadly consequences. Other students were able to see the same images as the drivers on a monitor outside of the car.

powerful, too. I went home and told my mom about it. I definitely won't be texting and driving ever again."

For students who don't have texting capabilities or didn't have their phones, a simulation was provided to allow them to experience

the dangers of drinking and driving. Though this was the original purpose of the simulator, texting has become more requested in recent years.

"As dangerous as drinking and driving is, the scary part is that

texting and driving is even more dangerous," PEERS presenters Robert Tower and Dennis Lickey told students. "Texting while driving has the same effects on our driving abilities as drinking a 12-pack would have. Now that's scary!"