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CHS STUDENTS TAKE ANTI-TEXTING AND DRIVING ASSEMBLY TO OLIVET COLLEGE

Charlotte High School students were invited to present an anti-texting and driving assembly to Olivet College's insurance and risk management students on October 8. The thirty-three junior students helped organize and facilitate "From Cloud 9 to Flatline" in their junior seminar class, with the help of their instructor, Monique Colizzi, and Chad Johnson. During this process, students became advocates of safe driving and focused their efforts on changing behaviors.



Included in the hour-long assembly were student generated public service announcements relating to the dangers of texting and driving and distracted driving, personal testimonies from students whose lives have been affected by distracted drivers, and keynote message delivered by Chad Johnson. Special guests were invited to help re-create the scene through their presence, and included Trooper Marco Jones (Michigan State Police), Jonathan Denton (Lynn Denton Agency), Bonnie and Gary White (Green Light Driving School), Tom Parker, Captain, Andy Craun, Cameron Shook and Townsend Montgomery (Olivet Fire and Rescue), and John Imeson (Eaton County Central Dispatch).

Students were responsible for passing out Band2Gether thumb bands as part of the campaign initiated by Fox 47 and Farm Bureau insurance, running the technology, a variety of speaking parts, and networking with guests, Gamma Iota Sigma students and Olivet College personnel.

The half hour story told by Johnson, included details of how he was nearly killed two years ago, when a distracted teen driver turned in front of him, catapulting him off of his motorcycle and over the automobile. Johnson relived the day that forever changed his life, and described it as a day like any other, getting up and going to work. After making a decision that day to purchase his dream bike (Harley Victory Judge), he went from being on Cloud 9, and four miles from home, to a situation where he was fighting to survive. Johnson spoke of his journey fighting to live, weeks spent in the hospital,

multiple surgeries, ongoing rehabilitation, and accounts of how the accident has forever changed his life. “At the beginning of the assembly, the actual 911 call from Chad’s accident is played, while pictures of the accident scene are displayed on the projection screen. “That moment draws in the audience, and immediately visible, are emotions of how real this situation is,” states Colizzi.

Since the accident, Johnson, who was a 25 year veteran of the construction industry, is faced with starting a new career, living with daily chronic pain and the horrific details of the accident. He has spoken publically to nearly 600 students and community members in the Maple Valley, Charlotte and Olivet communities. Johnson feels through sharing his personal story, he is making a positive impact on changing behavior. He reiterated to the audience that distracted driving is the number one cause of death for teenagers, and suggested ways to change their behavior and to become true advocates.

“My students really formed a connection with Chad, have become true leaders in this quest, and really showed their pride in working on an event that impacted students at the collegiate level,” stated Colizzi. CHS has plans to present the assembly to entire CHS student body in the spring.