

# 'Nightmare' at Sandburg

## Mock car crash part of drunken-driving awareness program

By Bradley Cole  
Correspondent

Rick and Pam Banks looked at their daughter Christina as she lay on the ground covered in "blood" Thursday morning at Carl Sandburg High School.

The sight made Pam Banks' hands shake as she tried to videotape the mock drunken-driving accident that unfolded before her and 1,700 juniors and seniors.

The set-up was designed in conjunction with the Palos Fire Protection District to show students the devastation of such a crash and to make them think twice about drinking and driving, particularly at prom and graduation time.

The program, "Welcome to Our Nightmare," also was held with the assistance of Palos Park and Orland Park, the Cook County Sheriff's Department and the Illinois State Police.

Similar scenes are being carried out at other schools throughout the south suburbs as school and police officials remind students about the dangers of drinking and driving.

"I'm glad my daughter volunteered to do this," Pam Banks said.

"She's a popular student and a good student and her peers look up to her. I think many of them will be shocked when they see her lying on the ground and bleeding."

Christina played the lone fatality in a three-car accident caused by Charlie Banko, a Sandburg senior.

Charlie, who said he has family members who have been injured as a result of drunken driving, said participating in the demonstration was important.

"I don't think the students realize what happens," he said. "An accident like this is devastating and affects a lot of people. This (demonstration) isn't something we do every year, so I hope



Volunteers hold up tombstone placards at the conclusion of the event, representing the dozens of people killed in drunken-driving accidents every day in the United States.

they pay attention and understand the reality of it."

Sandburg Assistant Principal Glenn Wood said the assembly began at the school several years ago after five students were killed in alcohol-related crashes during the 1997-98 school year.

"Ideally, we can minimally make a difference in one or two students' decisions," Wood said.

Sandburg freshman Katie Holmes said the demonstration caught the attention of several students.

"In the beginning of the demonstration a lot of students were laughing and joking around, but they got quiet and paid attention," Katie said. "I think it was good because it shows students what happens when they don't obey the law."

The demonstration ended after Nancy Hoy tearfully addressed the students and talked about her husband, Tom, who was killed by a drunken driver on St. Patrick's Day 1993.

She talked about their plans for adopting a child and starting a family, and how one man's careless decision took those plans away.

At the end of the program, 74 volunteers held up tombstones representing the 74 people killed every day in the United States in drunken-driving accidents.

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CHARLIE BANKO, Sandburg student

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**Sandburg High School student Erin Henry cries over the body of fellow student Christina Banks, who was "killed" Thursday during a mock drunken-driving accident at the Orland Park school.**

Photos by Matt Merton/Daily Southtown