

on the MOVE

"What do you mean, you're not going to drink with us?"

Too many times, statements such as these have led to tragic episodes involving alcohol or drugs, because a teen caved in to peers without foreseeing the consequences.

"I'm lucky in that I have a lot of good friends who don't pressure me," said Megan Hosey, 18, a self-described "non-user."

However, she observed that some classmates cannot resist temptation quite so easily — and that's why she joined the SADD program at Elmira's Notre Dame High School.

"It supports the kids who opt not to use drugs and alcohol and provides awareness for the ones who do. I wanted to be there for others," said Megan, a senior at Notre Dame and parishioner at St. Mary's Southside.

Megan is among 50 students from the 390-student high school who were involved in SADD this past year.

Formerly known as Students Against Drunk Driving, the national organization now calls itself Students Against Destructive Decisions. The national group, according to its Web site, is "dedicated to addressing the issues of underage drinking, impaired driving, drug use, and other destructive decisions and killers of young people."

Glad to be in SADD



(From left) Meghan Hosey, 18, Becca O'Connor, 17, and Danielle Erway, 17, shown at Notre Dame High School in Elmira May 16, help spread the word — especially around graduation time — about avoiding drinking and driving.

mean you're not cool."

Megan, Danielle and Becca were diocesan Hands of Christ recipients last fall. In nominating them, adult parish leaders noted the trio's past and present involvement in SADD.

"I think it has a good message. It's important that people take responsibility and know what their decisions can cause," Becca said of SADD, noting that the Notre Dame chapter staged a mock car crash in the schoolyard during her junior year.

The three seniors are due to graduate next month — the time of year for proms and graduation parties.

"Everyone's getting so antsy at the end of the year and wanting to be on their own," Danielle said.

As a reminder about the dangers of drinking and driving during this season, students are encouraged to sign a "prom promise" to abstain from alcohol at school-sponsored social events.

"We try to get the kids thinking about being safe," said Patricia Quinn, a

Notre Dame physical-education instructor who serves as SADD moderator.

If a student is offered alcohol, Quinn explained, his or her mind must already be made up. "That's not the time you decide. You have to make the decision long before that," she said. "That way,

when the situation presents itself, you know what your answer is going to be and hopefully there are some people around you who can support you."

Otherwise, Quinn remarked, "You're going to go with what's easiest, or what would be the 'cool' thing to do."

The influence of alcohol and drugs certainly doesn't end at graduation.

Megan said her experience with SADD will also prove valuable when she begins college at the University of Scranton next fall.

"The best thing to do is just keep your goals and focus while you're away," Megan said.

"I'll just focus on what I need to get done," Danielle added. "Hopefully I'll have self-confidence to do that." She and Becca will attend Coming Community College in the fall.

Sticking to her own principles, Danielle added, will help others avoid destructive behavior as well: "You can't preach to them; that won't work. Setting an example is the best way."

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