

Making Public Service Announcements

Glenmary School

Peace River, Alberta, Canada

Seizing an opportunity paid off for Glenmary students, and for the community that supported them. Not only did the students pack a powerful message about the dangers of drinking and driving into a public service announcement (PSA), but they also learned how to produce a radio spot, became local mini-celebrities, and earned a return engagement.

The school's Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies (HMHB) Action Team plunged into the project when a parent member of the team, who also works as a counselor at the Alberta Alcohol and Drug Abuse Commission (AADAC), told the school that the Commission and other organizations were looking for a group of students to make a PSA about drinking and driving. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police and Peace River Broadcasting had joined AADAC in the effort. The counselor invited students from other schools as well, but only the Glenmary team accepted.

Six students from the seventh, eighth, and ninth grades—all members of the HMHB Action Team—met with the counselor to brainstorm ideas and themes for the ad. The students then wrote and revised the script for a 30-second PSA. Peace River Broadcasting, which operates the local radio stations, provided studio time and a technician to work with the students, adding music and sound effects to their message. The students debuted the PSA for the whole school during morning announcements. Then, throughout December 2004, the PSA ran daily on local radio stations CKYL and KIX 106.

"The ad delivered a powerful message, especially when delivered in youthful voices," said

the Action Team coordinator. The students' efforts and finished product pleased the announcement's sponsors and generated positive response from the community. The radio audience also increased, as students encouraged their friends and families to listen for the PSA.

The students learned and experienced many things from the project. They practiced their research and writing skills in preparing the PSA, learned about radio production, met some of the local radio personalities, and experienced pride and satisfaction in hearing their work on the radio. Time presented the biggest challenge; the students had only a short window in which to prepare their script for the radio, so they learned some lessons about meeting deadlines.

In addition to providing an important message to the community and teaching students real-life lessons, the project helped the school reach one of its goals—to develop and maintain community connections that support student leadership and achievement. This project promoted leadership among the students who worked on the PSA, involved several community partners, and reached many members of the community.

The proof of the PSA's success rests in the Commission's follow-up: The Glenmary students were invited to do another PSA in May. The Action Team hopes to involve more students in this second effort.

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