

Lifestyles

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Museum to hold fund-raiser

The Amherst Museum is accepting new hats, gloves, scarves and mittens to decorate the Mitten Tree through Dec. 31 at the museum, 3755 Tonawanda Creek Road in Amherst. In return, donators will receive a complimentary admission to visit the museum. All contributions will be donated to the children at Buffalo School #45. Books are also being collected for the library at the school, grades Kindergarten through 8th grade.

Under a positive influence: SADD celebrates 25 years



Flanked by first responders, Sweet Home High School students Katie McCabeon, left, Ashley Strusa, center and Brianne Galli participated in a drunk-driving demonstration at their school.

by **KEN BARTOLOTTA**
Reporter

In the fall of 1981, two Wayland High School students lost their lives in separate alcohol-related crashes within two weeks of each other.

In response to this untimely loss, hockey coach Bob Anastas and a group of students at the Massachusetts school began an organization called Students Against Drunk Driving or SADD.

This student-led effort soon turned into a national movement, and in the group's first two years, 6,000 high schools across the country created chapters.

Twenty-five years later, SADD remains an advocate of positive decision making and a healthy lifestyle and has more than 10,000 chapters in middle schools, high schools and colleges.

In order to expand its goals, the group changed its name to Students Against Destructive Decisions in 1997.

In Western New York, SADD has remained a force with a large majority of schools in the area joining the fight against bad decision-making among youths.

At Sweet Home High School in Amherst, SADD is stronger and more relevant than ever, something that wasn't the case only a few years ago, according to SADD director Alicia Fiebelkorn.

"When I took this over three years ago, participation was extremely low," she said. "But because I had more time to put into it than other directors in the past,

"The idea is that if you volunteer and give back to others you'll feel good about yourself. The better you feel about yourself, the more positive outlook you have about who you are, the less likely you will turn to drugs and alcohol."

— Alicia Fiebelkorn, SADD director Sweet Home High School

we've been able to help it expand and grow."

For Fiebelkorn the group's goals have gone well beyond just telling students that drugs and alcohol are bad; it now takes a more hands-on approach.

"We now just don't focus on preaching the dangers of drugs and alcohol," she said. "Instead, we have expanded to doing communi-

ty service throughout the area."

The premise is simple: help yourself by helping others.

"The idea is that if you volunteer and give back to others you'll feel good about yourself," she said. "The better you feel about yourself, the more positive outlook you have about who you are, the less likely you will turn to drugs and alcohol."

Volunteer efforts at the high school have included work at soup kitchens and shelters

throughout the area as well as food drives and other charitable fund-raisers.

Throughout her years of participation with the group, Fiebelkorn has seen the positive effects that the program has on those who participate.

"I've learned that students are more likely to make wrong decisions when they don't have a lot

of positive influences," she said. "By doing things for others they feel good about themselves, and that prevents them from turning to drugs and alcohol."

Gail Zichetella, director of the SADD chapter at Cheektowaga Central High School, feels that the organization attracts a certain type of student.

"I think these students are the ones that actually have a belief that they want to share with others," she said. "It's an advantage for them to stand for something and promote it."

One of the most effective activities that SADD promotes in Cheektowaga is the involvement of younger students with the program.

"We like to have the younger students come in and make cards for the seniors," she said. "In the cards they ask them not to drink and drive. It's very cute, but it seems to help."

Zichetella feels the most inspiring aspect of SADD is the overwhelming selflessness that the students exhibit.

"These are kids who just want to help others and give back," she said. "It's a special thing, because the teen years are a very self-centered time for a lot of young people, so for kids to give back is very inspiring."

SADD also promotes chapters at East Aurora High School, West Seneca East and West high schools and Orchard Park High School, however representatives from those areas could not be reached as of press time.

For more information on SADD, call 1-877-SADD-INC or visit www.sadd.org.

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Liz Gorski on the left and Katie Heerd participate in a SADD activity at Cheektowaga High School.

