

Outreach Program Teaches Teens about Trauma, Injury Prevention

Paula Rasich



Left:
Philbert Y. Van, MD, FACS,
from Oregon Health
& Science University
in Portland, prepares
students from the Boone
Academy of Health Science
in Orlando, FL, for STOP
THE BLEED® instruction.

Right:
Instructor André Jamison,
who is a member of the
Florida Teen Safe Driving
Coalition and founder of
DriveTrainer Academy,
Inc., provided the driving
simulators used for
the EAST Community
Outreach Program at
Boone High School.



Trauma surgeons, nurses, advanced practice providers, physicians, and researchers from around the US traveled to William R. Boone High School in Orlando, FL—a magnet school that offers specialized courses for teens interested in healthcare careers—to take part in the annual Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma (EAST) Community Outreach Program held in conjunction with the EAST Annual Scientific Assembly.

Left:
Boone students learn STOP THE BLEED® techniques, including how to keep blood inside the “body” by using cloth to pack the wound in a severely injured person.

Right:
Hundreds of students at Boone High School participate in the EAST Community Outreach Program.



Left:
An EAST volunteer instructor teaches an overview of basic bleeding control and the importance of helping with life-threatening bleeding.

Right:
More than 40 EAST Community Outreach Program volunteers (not all pictured here) work with students each year, raising awareness about preventing injuries and saving lives.

MORE THAN 400 STUDENTS attended the daylong event in January, which was designed to educate high schoolers about trauma and injury prevention.

“When you are young, you think you are invincible,” said Hee Soo Jung, MD, FACS, FCCM, a trauma surgeon and associate professor in the Department of Surgery at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

“Rather than meeting people on the worst day of their lives, I’d prefer to meet them in this awesome setting where we connect, teach, and potentially prevent something tragic from happening. The students have so much energy and are excited to talk to us and learn about what we do.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that trauma is the leading cause of death for people between the ages of 1 and 44. Among children and adolescents aged 1–19, the leading causes of death are firearm-related injuries and motor vehicle crashes, according to the CDC.

“This is the population that we can make an impact on and where injury prevention is really key,” said Linda Dultz, MD, MPH, FACS, co-coordinator of the EAST Program and a general surgeon who specializes in burn, trauma, acute, and critical care surgery at The University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center in Dallas. “So, if we can get to them early, engage and raise awareness, it’s meaningful for all of us, because as trauma surgeons, we see these injuries every single day.”

Since 2012, the EAST Community Outreach Program has educated several thousand high school students from different regions of the country about the dangers of distracted driving due to texting and alcohol use. The combination of lack of driving experience and risky decision-making is fatal for this population; with that in mind, the EAST distracted driving program was born.

When taking part in the interactive session, the students learn about risk factors—such as impaired

driving, speeding, traveling with a passenger, and cell phone use—that most often contribute to motor vehicle fatalities. Simulated driving exercises give them the chance to get hands-on experience and see for themselves how quickly a distraction can turn deadly.

For much of the day at Boone High School, Dr. Jung, who is the immediate past-chair of EAST’s Injury Control and Violence Prevention Committee, worked with students as young as 13 years old on navigating specific distracted driving scenarios, helping them learn how to drive safely. He is a father of two children, including a preteen, so the experience was particularly eye-opening for him.

A Collaborative Effort

EAST was established in 1986 with a mission to advance the care and rehabilitation of the injured patient. Expanding on that mission, in 2012, the association joined the EAST Annual Scientific Assembly to launch its Community Outreach Program, a collaborative effort featuring trauma professionals who mentor teenagers and teach them about the impact of trauma and crisis. The Society of Trauma Nurses also has supported this event since its inception.

“This started out as an idea—how can we as trauma surgeons reach out to the community and make an impact on the younger generation. Every year, the program has grown a little more as we continue to make connections in the community,” Dr. Dultz said. “Today, we have a whole buffet of programs that high schools can choose from. They can pick and choose what parts of the curriculum they want to customize for their students.”

At first, the annual event focused on distracted driving and bringing trauma survivors into high schools to tell their stories.

In 2017, when the ACS launched STOP THE BLEED® (STB), it was added to the lineup. An STB

course is provided during the outreach program, and students learn an overview of basic bleeding control and become empowered to make a life or death difference when a bleeding emergency happens.

Other programs covering topics such as trauma professional careers, interpersonal violence, substance abuse, burn safety, and firearm safety also were eventually developed and offered to the high schoolers. In addition, a Careers in Medicine panel was developed to give these teens the opportunity to learn about different career paths in healthcare associated with trauma.

“The best feedback we get is from the students who say they love connecting with the trauma surgeons and healthcare providers,” Dr. Dultz said. “These students might not otherwise have connections to their hospital system or physicians or be familiar with the pathway to become a physician, so we share stories about what we do day in and day out, and we answer their questions about what it takes to become a trauma surgeon, nurse, or EMT.”

Being Brave Saves Lives

The 2023 outreach event, themed Being Brave Saves Lives, was the first since 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic forced the program to pause.

“At Boone, we worked with the local police officers, emergency medical services, and fire department personnel, and we partnered with Orlando Regional Medical Center, connecting with people who are thinking about injury prevention in new and innovative ways,” Dr. Jung said.

The three-part program at Boone High School included trauma survivorship and STB, in addition to distracted driving.

The trauma survivorship program was newly revamped to focus on mental health issues related to being a trauma survivor, such as anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder. The school specifically requested trauma survivorship because the years of isolation and uncertainty due to the pandemic has had lasting traumatic effects, causing some students to develop anxiety and depression.

The community has faced many challenges in recent years, and the session helped students understand the importance of taking care of their mental health and how to cope with crisis. By learning life-saving skills and about injury prevention, they can “be brave” and potentially save a life.

“What we are trying to convey is that the students have the power to make sure they are safe, that their friends are safe, and their family and loved ones are safe,” Dr. Jung said.

Surviving Trauma

One of the defining moments of the day came when Crystal, a Florida resident, opened up about her experience of being in a car accident in 2009. She was on her way to school—at the time, she was studying to be an athletic trainer—when her car was struck by a drunk driver. Crystal described the debilitating accident and how it impacted her physically, mentally, and emotionally.

Over the ensuing years, she underwent multiple surgeries. Even though she survived the trauma, it was an uphill battle just to walk again. The accident took away her ability to play sports and fulfill her dream of becoming an athletic trainer.

Her story brought tears to the eyes of some students. Like so many, Crystal sought

Left:
Students practice on driving simulators and experience what it feels like to drive a car while receiving text messages.

Right:
EAST has partnered with the ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation for a trauma survivorship session in which students learn strategies for coping with trauma.



“I’m really proud of the organization and its mission. We go to conferences to network and see the latest literature, but I think this program is a mission of service, which is why a lot of us became doctors in the first place.”

—Dr. Linda Dultz



Access the
multimedia
extras at
facs.org/bulletin

professional help for her mental health issues and, today, she advocates for laws against distracted and drunk driving.

“We stay away from scared straight-type of programs. Those programs aren’t necessarily effective. But we do think it’s important for students to understand trauma-informed care, what patients go through every day, and how they are experiencing their trauma,” Dr. Jung said. “It’s one thing to talk about trauma and how it happens, but to have someone share their firsthand, lived experience and everything they have gone through to recover from that event is really important. I think her story resonated with the students.”

Leaving a Lasting Impression

Reaching beyond high school students, Drs. Dultz and Jung are focused on opportunities that lie ahead.

For instance, they are considering new programs like fall prevention for the elderly and partnering with the American Red Cross to install carbon monoxide detectors in the homes of those in underserved communities.

In recent years, the Community Outreach Program participated in several large STB events for host communities and local organizations. In the future, Dr. Dultz said she has a goal of increasing education and awareness related to firearm safety.


“The more information we can provide around that topic, the more informed the public can be,” she said.

Dr. Jung added, “We must think about new ways to make a long-lasting impact on our communities. One of the things I have focused on has been fostering connections. I hope that is our legacy.”

Drs. Dultz and Jung said the potential to enhance the health and lives of the people within the community is motivating.

“I’m really proud of the organization and its mission. We go to conferences to network and see the latest literature, but I think this program is a

mission of service, which is why a lot of us became doctors in the first place,” Dr. Dultz said.

Dr. Jung agreed. “It’s great to give back to the communities that we visit during our annual conferences,” he said. “EAST has many facets, and one of those is connecting with like-minded people in the world of trauma surgery and teaching injury prevention.” 

Paula Rasich is a freelance writer.

Bibliography

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Injury Prevention and Control. Available at <https://www.cdc.gov/injury/index.html>. Accessed February 13, 2023.

Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma: Advancing Science, Fostering Relationships, and Building Careers. Available at <https://www.east.org>. Accessed February 24, 2023.

Eastern Association for the Surgery of Trauma. Statement on Firearm-Related Injuries. Available at <https://www.east.org/about-east/news-and-events/news/details/326/aast-east-wta-statement-on-firearmrelated-injuries->. Accessed February 3, 2023.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. Distracted Driving. Available at <https://www.nhtsa.gov/risky-driving/distracted-driving>. Accessed February 24, 2023.

ThinkFirst. 10 Leading Causes of Death by Age Group. Available at https://www.thinkfirst.org/sites/default/files/leading_causes_of_death_by_age_group_2017_1100w850h.jpg. Accessed February 16, 2023.

ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation. Available at <https://www.thinkfirst.org>. Accessed February 20, 2023.