



Dear Parents,

The school will be hosting MADD Canada's **SmartWheels** elementary school program on _____, 202_.

Traffic crashes remain by far the **largest single cause of death among 16-25 year olds. Amongst this age group, almost 56% of all motor vehicle fatalities are alcohol and/or drug-related.** While young people are significantly overrepresented in alcohol-related deaths as drivers, they are overrepresented to an even greater extent as passengers. The problem of impaired driving among youth in Canada is very real.

It's never too early to teach our youth about the dangers of impaired driving and getting in a vehicle with an impaired driver. **Studies show that the use of alcohol and cannabis starts as early as age 11 and that use increases steadily between grades 7-9.** Before students even reach high school and begin to drive, many are already exposed to or participating in risky behaviours that could lead to impaired driving, among other harmful consequences, in later years.

SmartWheels is a curriculum based program for students in grades 4 through 6 and is delivered virtually (or in person where permitted by the province or school board). The presentations are one hour long and are delivered by a MADD Canada Facilitator. On-screen video hosts introduce short video clips throughout the hour that describe the effects of alcohol and cannabis on developing brains and bodies and discusses impaired driving consequences. Students respond to questions to reinforce the material covered. Students also participate in "choose your own adventure"-style decision-making scenarios. The outcome of each scenario depends on the student's answers. Students then see how it looks and feels to drive, while impaired by drugs or alcohol in a virtual reality type video. They also see the personal story of one young victim of impaired driving.

So why is it important for students in grades 4, 5 & 6 to participate in the SmartWheels Program? *SmartWheels* raises students' awareness about the risks of alcohol and drugs before they are exposed to them, influences responsible decision making and teaches safety strategies. Achieving these outcomes will result in better

informed youth who are significantly more likely to make positive, responsible decisions, resulting in fewer injuries and deaths among our most vulnerable road users.

Here are two of the testimonials that we have received from Grade 4, 5 and 6 educators who have recently hosted our **SmartWheels** presentations:

"Just an excellent and engaging program. The students really enjoyed it with so much active participation. Very interactive and got the students very excited and eager to learn. The questions were fabulous and very informative. Very good, detailed instruction from Harrison. He did a great job with the students. Would highly recommend to any Grade 4-6 class. Thanks!" Weston Nesbitt, Forestview Public School (Niagara Falls)

"The presentation was highly interactive and engaging for my students. The sharing of a story of those affected by impaired drivers was impactful. I am confident that this experience will shape my students positive and healthy decision making going forward in their lives." V. Armstrong, Oscar Petersen Public School (Mississauga)

SmartWheels will have an enormous impact on Canadian students and will influence their own decision-making for years to come. We hope that after your child sees this presentation that you will be able to have a family discussion about what they have learned. By educating our future generation about impaired driving, lives will be saved and injuries prevented. Impaired driving is a totally senseless crime and is 100% preventable.

SmartWheels is inspiring and empowering young people to make a difference and be the generation that chooses not to drive impaired by alcohol and/or drugs.

Sincerely,

MADD Canada

If you would like more information on our **SmartWheels Program**, please visit our website: <http://madd.ca/pages/programs/youth-services/school-programs/>

For additional information and resources for parents go to:
<http://madd.ca/pages/programs/youth-services/information-for-parents/>

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