

International award pays tribute to South Africa's campaign against drinking & driving

Anti-drinking and driving organisation South Africans Against Drunk Driving (SADD) has won the Prince Michael International Road Safety Award in recognition of its national university project, focusing on vehicle crashes as a leading cause of death amongst the youth.



Award winners Charlotte Sullivan (left) and Caro Smith from South Africans Against Drunk Driving, receive the prestigious Prince Michael International Road Safety Award from HRH Prince Michael of Kent (middle).

The campaign, Responsible Drinking, and Drinking then Driving Project, has been operating in eight universities across South Africa since 2008, in partnership with the South African Breweries (SAB).

"South Africa's youth play a critical role in the sustainability and strength of our country's economy and the loss of life causes unnecessary pain and suffering in families," says Caro Smit of SADD.

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), more than 18 000 lives are lost per year in South Africa because of road crashes and 60% of these are due to alcohol misuse. Managing responsible alcohol use is achieved most effectively through focused education awareness programs which target 'at risk' groups eg university students.

The project is designed so that peer educators work together with the counselling departments of the universities and run programmes to create awareness of the harm excessive alcohol use causes to their studies, bodies and on the roads.

The campaign messages included 'Friends don't let friends drink and drive'; 'Drinking Rule - 1 unit per hour'; 'Safety Driving Rule - Zero units'.

The educational element of the campaign focuses on developing more responsible drinking then driving habits, teaches about units of alcohol and it relates to blood and breath alcohol concentrations and calls for early diagnosis and treatment of harmful drinking patterns.

'Drunk buster goggles' that simulate the effects of impairment, amongst others, reduced alertness; slowed reaction time; confusion; visual distortion and alteration of depth perception, are provided during training to enable fun and interactive participation and learning.

Impressed with campaign delivery

Judges for the Prince Michael International Awards were particularly impressed with the innovative and comprehensive way in which the campaign was delivered and welcomed the significant involvement of the private sector through SAB in supporting the initiative.

"We are grateful to SAB for its sponsorship and commitment to the responsible use of alcohol and in being proactive about road safety in this Decade of Action for Road Safety," says SADD Founder Caro Smit.

"SAB is proud that the financial backing to SADD over the years, has helped it to do sterling work in communities, particularly tertiary institutions, but the culmination to this prestigious award is a moment to be proud.

"We share the concerns by communities about the harm caused by alcohol abuse, particularly on our country's roads and will continue to support SADD in their endeavours to bring about positive change in attitude and behaviour," says Bongumusa Makhathini, SAB head of public policy and strategic integration.

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