

PARTY program drives home message

BY AMANDA PERSICO
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Young people are inundated by a celebrity culture inviting them to party like a rockstar.

But the important part is to be a S.T.A.R. — Stop before taking part in any risky behaviour. Think about the consequences of your actions. Act in a safe manner to minimize risk. And be responsible for your actions.

That's the message behind the new Prevent Alcohol and Risk-related Trauma in Youth (PARTY) program run through Markham Stouffville Hospital, which launched recently.

Students from Markham District High School recently toured the emergency trauma room as well as the intensive care unit to get a behind-the-scenes look and feel for a major trauma accident.

"If you have the slightest inclination something is not right, your gut feeling is usually the right feeling. No job, no party, no text message is worth your life"

Following the hands-on tour, students then hear from Ontario Provincial Police, paramedics, physicians and a near-fatal accident survivor.

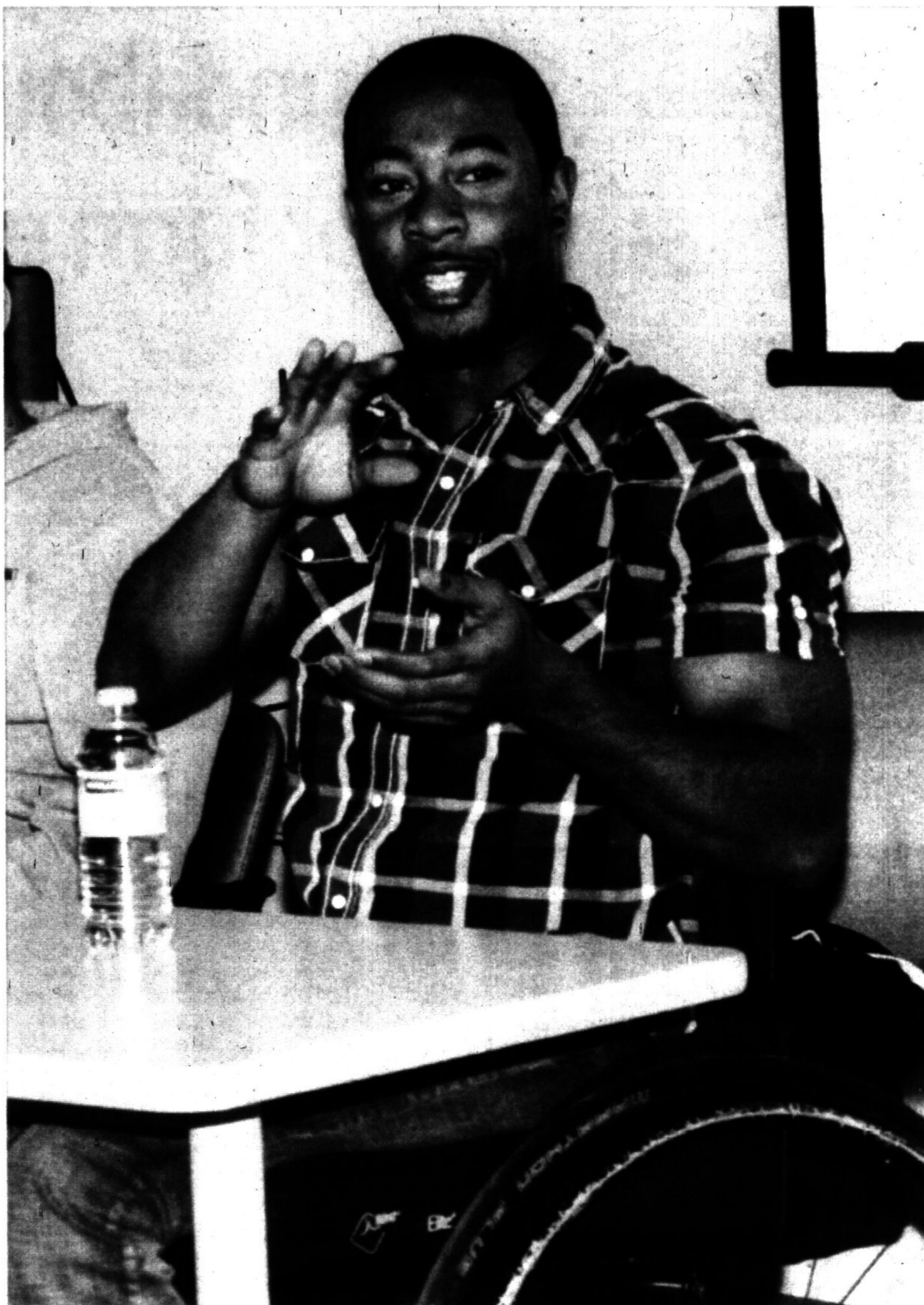
Being a S.T.A.R. only takes 30 seconds, said Anthony Lue, 25, who was the victim of a near-fatal accident that left him paralyzed.

"Be careful and take that extra 30 seconds," he said. "You only have one life. You could die before you know it."

More than four years ago, Mr. Lue, then 21, was an apprentice at an auto body shop in Pickering when he was asked to help move junkyard cars across a parking lot. Without brake or steering fluid in the car, the 800-metre coast from one end of the parking lot to the other was more than terrifying.

"That wasn't the best thing to do," he said. "Thank God, the car was built well."

While still in the driver's seat, Mr. Lue was nudged onto a large scale weighing the hunk of junk. Before he had a chance to get out of the car, the car was picked up by a large magnetic crane, crushing the car. He was then raised about 15 feet in the air and dropped to the ground. The crane operator



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHIEDT

didn't know anyone was still in the car.

Mr. Lue remembers being covered in shattered glass and then covered again by a blue tarp while firefighters used the Jaws of Life to pry the car open.

He was then airlifted to the hospital. Mr. Lue sustained a broken back near his belly button and a minor fracture near his neck.

A minor scar on his hand, two rods, eight screws and a wheelchair are all he has left to

Anthony Lue, 25, talks to high school students as part of the new Prevent Alcohol and Risk-related Trauma in Youth (PARTY) program, run through Markham Stouffville Hospital. Mr. Lue was paralyzed four years ago while working as an apprentice at an auto body shop.

remind him of the accident.

The former high school athlete, who set the provincial record for hurdles in 2004, is now confined to a wheelchair.

"In one quick second, everything changed," he said. "The way I get up in the morning, shower, go to the washroom, cook and interact with friends and family is completely different."

All it takes is 30 seconds to think before you act.

Now, Mr. Lue is training for the 2016 Paralympics in hand cycling.

"If you have the slightest inclination something is not right, your gut feeling is usually the right feeling. No job, no party, no text message is worth your life," he told the group of Markham high school students.

The program, which is open to local schools, puts a focus on risk-related behaviour, from drinking and driving to texting and driving and knowing the consequences of your choices.

The program costs about between \$250 and \$300 per class and is open to all students in York and Durham regions with an emphasis on schools in Markham, Whitchurch-Stouffville and Uxbridge.

Drinking and driving accidents involving teenagers are decreasing, but distracted driving incidents are on the rise, Markham Stouffville Hospital PARTY program co-ordinator Amanda McKissock said.

"We don't want to dictate," she said. "We want to educate using all the senses. Teens get to see, hear and smell what risky behaviour can cause. We're not here to say, 'Don't do it.' We want teens to think about what can happen if they chose to do it."

For Grade 11 student Garishan Ravishanar, the simple message hit home.

"Anything can happen," he said. "At 16, I was so excited to drive. You don't think about driving as a responsibility. It's a huge responsibility. If you're not careful, you can kill someone, maybe kill yourself."

Opera Night CONCERT

Sunday, October 27 at 7:15 -9:00pm

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- Addio Fiorito Asil - Dein Ist Mein Ganzes Herz
- Rosabelle - What a Wonderful World
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- Parla Siamoli - O Sole Mio

Special guest appearance by renowned Tenor Mario Zhang