

CONFERENCE RECAP

"Rising above the Spotlight," the 2018 NC SADD Youth Empowerment Conference, was a blast. The conference ran November 16-18 at the Marriott City Center in Downtown Raleigh. The theme was Hollywood, and students were in groups that each represented a show business awards show. The Student Advisory Board (SAB) presided over the weekend and led student activities. Students attended workshops on highway safety, leadership, teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS, vaping, alcohol and other drug use, abusive relationships and sexual assault. Advisors attended workshops that addressed programming, chapter guidance, fundraising, securing administrative support and other issues. They also attended some of the student workshops.



Secretary Machel Sanders with SAB member Romario Crisanto of West Johnston High School

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The cheers of each chapter were heard as they proudly represented their schools in the roll call during the Recognition of Schools. NC Central University SADD was in attendance, and they did a school shout out that included the famous eagle sign. High school and middle school students look up to these members of colleges who continue to make positive choices after high school graduation.



Eagles in the house!

On opening night, after a meal of pizza and wings, the conference was treated to a message from the NC Department of Administration Secretary Machel Sanders. Her message revved the students up and brought them to their feet for a standing ovation. She spoke about the Power of "Yet," meaning any negative statements or thoughts about

oneself should be succeeded by the word **yet**. "I don't make good grades **yet**." "I don't know how to do that **yet**." The cheers of each chapter were heard as they proudly represented their schools in the roll call during the Recognition of Schools. NC Central University SADD was in attendance, and they did a school shout out that included the famous eagle sign. High school and middle school students look up to these members of colleges who continue to make positive choices after high school graduation. **Pitt County** SADD members did an excellent presentation on the work they are doing in relationship/domestic violence prevention, and **West**

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Contact

Harriett Southerland
919 807-4408

hsoutherland@ncsadd.org

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Council for Women & Youth Involvement
Department of Administration

Johnston and Cleveland High Schools shared their traffic safety projects. These chapters are doing commendable work. Many thanks to them for their efforts and commitment. We love to have chapters share their successes during the conference.

We were honored to have Mark Ezzell, director of the Governor's Highway Safety Program (GHSP) in the NC Department of Transportation. GHSP helps to sponsor the conference each year. Ezzell discussed the need for continued efforts in traffic fatality and injury prevention. He talked about



Pitt County SADD members cheer for their schools.



West Johnston SADD-JoCo Teen Drivers advisor Amanda Fisher (at podium) and SADD members.

teen traffic safety issues and statistics, and he thanked the students and advisors for organizing highway safety projects and activities.

For the second year in a row, SADD CEO Rick Birt participated in our conference for the entire weekend, addressing the students at each assembly. He was a hit with the students with his energetic personality and humor. He also conducted and facilitated the advisor workshops. We are grateful for the support of the national office.

Friday evening ended with friendly competitions and team-building games among the student groups, who were named MTV, Oscars, Teens' Choice, Met Gala, Emmy, Grammy, Golden Globe and ESPY. The advisors were SAG, and they participated in a welcome and get-to-know-



Mark Ezzell



CEO Rick Birt

you session facilitated by the new Council for Women & Youth Involvement Deputy Director, Emily Roach. The advisors shared where they were from, how long they had been advising and interesting stories about themselves. Roach said she was looking forward to getting to know them better and helping their chapters thrive. She and the state coordinator emphasized the importance of contacting the state SADD office any time they need help.

Everyone was up bright and early (emphasis on *early*) Saturday morning for an exciting day of learning and doing. Students attended workshops conducted by Annette Carrington-Johnson of the Durham County Health Department, Kimetha Fulwood of the Johnston County Health Department,



Emily Roach (*right*) with SAB member Pepper Bertsch

Tammie Hall of the NC Department of Administration, Ronald Johnson of StreetSafe, Kevin Smith of NC State University and Davis Powell and Associates, and Darrell Stover, lecturer at NC State University. We offer heartfelt thanks to these presenters who devoted their Saturday to helping SADD members hone their prevention skills.

When workshops were over, everyone walked to the Museum of History on the Bicentennial Mall for a cultural enrichment activity: The Native American Cultural Festival. Students saw ceremonial dancing and learned the meaning behind the dances. They learned how early Native Americans burned out logs to make canoes, and how they made tools and teepees. Native American artifacts, artwork and jewelry were on display. The students learned cultural history and took turns shooting at targets with bows and arrows. There were many other interesting hands-on activities to engage the students and advisors, some of whom had photo opportunities with the dancers.



Top: Male Fancy Dancer; bottom: Female Jingle Dancers

After the festival, everyone had several hours to explore the city on their own before evening activities began.

The attendees dressed in their evening clothes for the Saturday evening banquet. They looked like they were attending a Hollywood gala!

A candlelight memorial was held to remember the young people who have lost their lives or were seriously injured due to traffic crashes, alcohol and drug use or other destructive decisions. Department of Administration Deputy Secretary Christy Agner and Alcoholic Beverage Control Commissioner A.D. “Zander” Guy were honored guests. Agner, a SADD member when she was in high school, commended the students and advisors on their commitment to SADD and encouraged them to persist in their efforts. Guy spoke

about the hazards of underage drinking.

Mack Murray was the keynote speaker, and he encouraged the students to persevere and not be deterred by obstacles in their paths.



Candlelight Memorial



Zander Guy



Mack Murray

Saturday evening was also awards night. SAB member **Nicholas Wilson**, of West Johnston High School in Benson, received the Student of the Year Award. **Melanie Gonzalez**, of First Flight High School in Kill Devil Hills, received the Outstanding Contributions Award. West Johnston High School received the Chapter of the Year Award for the fourth consecutive year. **Kellene Bock**, of West Iredell High School in Statesville, was recognized as Advisor of the Year. The evening culminated with the Dancing with the Stars dance.



Nicholas Wilson (left) and state coordinator Harriett Southerland



Melanie Gonzalez



Our stars rockin' it out!

Rick Birt helped close out the conference with an inspirational address to the students on Sunday morning. There were also drawings for lots of prizes.

As part of the closing session, conference participants walked to the Capitol Building to view the Highway Safety Shoe Memorial, sponsored by the Institute for Traffic Research and Education at NC State University. Each pair of shoes represented a person killed on NC highways. Students wore yellow SADD stickers and placed yellow crepe flowers on pairs of shoes.

In all, the conference was a roaring success. Students said they were inspired to go back to

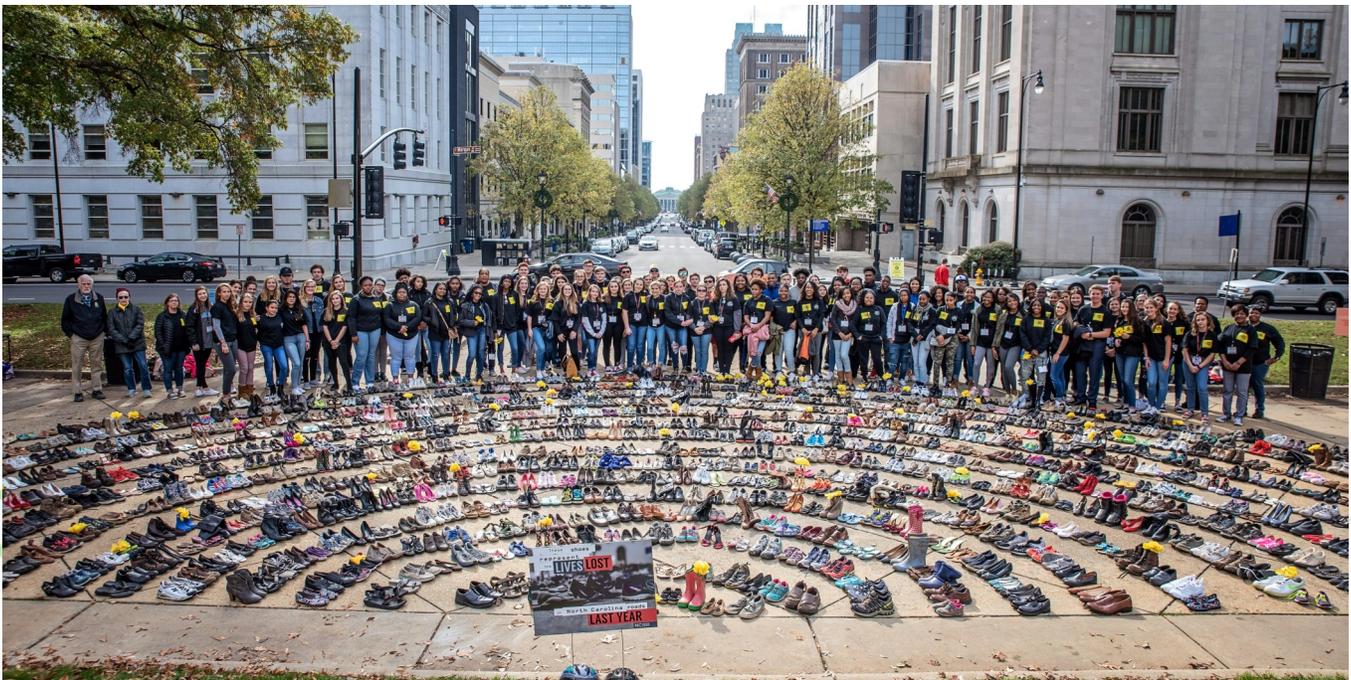
their schools and communities with renewed skills and enthusiasm.

The Council for Women and Youth Involvement offers its heartfelt appreciation to the schools that work with us to keep SADD active and strong in our state.

The 2019 SADD Conference will be November 22-24. The location will be announced at a later date. Start your fundraising now. Advisors at the 2018 conference talked about the importance of not waiting until almost conference time to start raising funds to pay registration fees.

CHAPTER REGISTRATION

Thanks to the advisors who have registered their chapters. However, many schools have yet to register. It is important that all our schools are registered with the national office so you can receive resources and program materials. It is also important to know how many chapters we have in our state. To register, visit the SADD Portal at <https://saddmembership.registernmychapter.com/sadd#>. This is a secure site, and your information is encrypted. You will need to submit the nominal membership fee of \$5.00 per member.



Students view traffic safety memorial before placing flowers



The State SADD Office and the Council for Women and Youth Involvement wish all good things for you and your loved ones at this holiday season and in the coming year.

Thanks for your support, and keep up the good work!