



The  
**Meagan Napier**  
FOUNDATION

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## Sheriff Provides Lesson for County Teens



As reported on WEAR Channel 3 on April 11, 2008, "Santa Rosa ranks fourth in the state, (now we're number one) for a county its size, in the number of teens who are killed or injured behind the wheel. To help educate students about being better drivers, the Sheriff's Office brought in a speaker who knows the consequences of drinking and driving first hand. She hopes her loss will be a lifelong lesson for all of them. Renee Napier has a heartfelt message for these students at Pace High School. Her daughter Meagan and her best friend, Lisa Dickson, both twenty, were killed by a drunk driver in Gulf Breeze in 2002." I know that these kids can really relate on a more personal level because a lot of them have heard the story or maybe seen the billboard, for me to come back to the county where they died in, is huge," said Napier. Napier now lives in Tampa, but she speaks to students across the country about the accident and the man who caused it, Eric Smallridge." My name is Eric Smallridge or I guess I should say it was," Smallridge said in the video, dressed in his prison jumper. "I'm now inmate P22679. On May 11, 2002, I made the worst decision of my life. I chose to drink and drive." Smallridge is now a part of Renee Napier's message. He took part in a DUI prevention video Napier plays for high schoolers to help them understand the importance of making good decisions. Smallridge was sentenced to 22 years in prison for the fatal accident, but the court later cut his sentence in half at the request of the victims' families." I believe that we live in a world that hurts," Napier explained, "and that people hang on to that hurt and that anger and they can't move forward and I think once you get to the point where you can forgive someone for something that they've done to you, that your healing begins and you can move forward and have a full life, and you're free from bitterness and anger and hatred." Napier also travels with the car that her daughter and Lisa died in, hoping the visual impact will help drive the message home. Students are listening." I'm not a big person about drinking anyways and partying," said Senior Dustin Retherford, "so if it was one of my family members, if I put myself in her shoes, it would be hard to deal with everything." Of course it's not going to affect everybody and reach everybody," said Junior Tia Shallow, "but even if it stopped one more student from drinking and driving, then it was well worth it." Napier has been speaking to high schoolers across the county all week. The Sheriff's Office paid for the program through a twenty thousand dollar state grant. They're also using it to encourage students to buckle up." My hope is that I at least touch some of them with a message that they will take

with them forever and that when they do get into a situation that's uncomfortable, that they will think about what they've heard and they will learn from it," Napier said. With prom season approaching, law enforcement hope students will take this message seriously. You can see the full DUI prevention video including Eric Smallridge and Renee Napier on YouTube."

Available from <http://www.santarosasheriff.org/SheriffDUIProgram.shtml>