

BIRMINGHAM Eccentric

Thursday, June 30, 2005

Ashley's Dream comes true at the library

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It could have been just another newspaper clipping, a tragedy slowly forgotten over time.

David Easterbrook wouldn't let that happen.

His daughter, Ashley, along with fellow Troy High students Michael Jamieson and Andy Stindt, was killed by a drunken driver in 1997. They were out for some coffee. A 33-year-old motorist, on her way home from a night at the bar, ran a red light and smashed into their car at Crooks and Long Lake.

All three kids died at the scene. Ashley, the youngest of the group, had just turned 18.

From that tragedy, Easterbrook found the strength to form the Foundation for Ashley's Dream, a nonprofit group aimed at reducing the number of drunken driving deaths that occur each year.

"Within an hour of her death we knew we wanted to do something," Easterbrook said, looking back. "Her whole life was centered around helping others ... she was always there for her friends. She wanted to go into nursing."

She would have turned 26 this year.

This summer, the teen advisory group at Baldwin Public Library is teaming up with the Foundation for Ashley's Dream through a "Buck a Book" reading challenge. Teenagers in grades six-12 are gathering pledges for every book they read between now and August.

Their goal is to raise \$1,000 for the foundation.

Teen Librarian Bill Harmer said he created the Buck a Book reading challenge after learning about the foundation from some parents.

"I saw Mr. Easterbrook speak at a couple of schools and obviously I believe in his message," Harmer said. "What he tells teens is you're not an adult until you start thinking about others. That's a powerful message."

The program runs through Aug. 12. An ice cream social is scheduled that afternoon at the library for all participants.

Easterbrook, who dropped by the library this week to help kick off the event, was clearly moved by the number of teens already signed up to participate.

"It's really excellent to see young people involved in something like this," he said. "Kids have to learn about choices, and the impact of their decisions ... to make that a habit, it has to happen every day."

Teenagers can pick up a registration form and pledge sheet at the library. Forms also are available on the library Web site (www.baldwinlib.org) or foundation Web site (www.ashleysdream.org). For more information, call (248) 554-4656.

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