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Speaker offers insight gleaned from tragedy

By THE DAILY HAMPSHIRE GAZETTE
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WESTHAMPTON - Students at Hampshire Regional High School today will hear from someone who learned in the hardest way possible what reckless driving can do.

Cara Filler, 32, will talk to them about how the 1994 death of her twin sister Mairin, the day after they turned 18, changed her life. Mairin died in a car crash that authorities said was caused by excessive speed. The car's driver, her boyfriend, survived the crash.

Filler has turned that tragedy into her life's mission, traveling the world to speak to students about, among other things, how to make better, safer decisions, a campaign she has dubbed "Changing Attitudes, Saving Lives."

In assemblies at Hampshire Regional today, Filler will talk to more than 800 students about the tragic consequences of reckless driving.

Mary Phelan, health education coordinator, said Filler's talk "should really give the kids something to think about."

Members of the high school's student-run Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) chapter raised $2,000 to bring Filler to speak after four students from the group heard Filler last fall at a conference in Danvers.

"They were really inspired by her message and presentation," said Courtney Cottrell, the group's advisor and English teacher.

"She's very powerful," said Desi Vega, Hampshire Regional's physical education teacher and coach for the girls basketball team. "She gets her message across to everyone in the audience and gets everyone involved. What she explains is really touching. I really enjoyed her."

Filler, a native of Richmond City in British Colombia, Canada, has worked with educators, schools and police and departments worldwide. Filler is also the founder and president of EducaTEEN products and Vision Fillers Inc., a business coaching and consulting firm.

Vega, co-advisor to the SADD group, said he and the students spoke to Fuller about trying to recruit more members, which has about 10 students.

"She said #I can definitely help you out with that,'" Vega explained.

The group held a homemade holiday pie sale and a silent auction to help collect enough money. Westhampton Police Chief David A. White also supported the appearance with a $600 Westhampton Community Policing Grant.

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