



Athens Academy • Post Office Box 6548 • Athens, Georgia 30604

Dear Lauren,

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for bringing your program back to the parents, students, and faculty of Athens Academy. It had been a few years since your last presentation and I must say that while I recall the last one being poignant and powerful, this one really took it up a notch.

The program you presented to the parents on the evening before the children was perhaps the most powerful program I have seen in a school. Your genuine, heartfelt presentation was well-received by the parents because you spoke with conviction and confidence and because you are clearly committed to this important cause. Some presenters offer “just stats and facts.” You, on the other hand, offer all that plus heart. The fact that parents were talking about the presentation for weeks afterwards is a sure sign of success. One mother told me that it was the most important presentation she had heard and she wished she had heard it 8 years ago when her first child got his driver’s license. She said it would have facilitated some very important conversations.

Although I had other obligations and could not attend the morning assembly where you presented to the students and faculty, I know that the presentation you gave them was equally as stirring. While away in the mountains with the 8th graders, I received phone calls and e-mails from the faculty just moments after the presentation saying that the students were “still talking about it.” Some of the teachers even said the students wanted to talk about it in class afterwards. It is sometimes difficult to get students to listen, much less talk to adults about things, but clearly they listened to your presentation because afterwards they wanted to talk to teachers and to each other about driving and the inherent dangers associated with it.

I also thought you would like to know that I received calls thanking me for sending the booklet and letter home to each family. Parents who were unable to attend your evening presentation very much appreciated receiving the information. Some said that their children came home talking about it and that the booklet they received a week later allowed the topic to be brought back to the forefront of conversation. In fact, I recently received an e-mail from a parent asking me for another copy. They recently moved and misplaced their original. She said she liked “having it out” because it served as a visual reminder that very bad things really do happen to good families and to teenagers. She hopes that seeing it will remind her child of what he heard that morning and will keep him consciously aware of the dangers.

Simply put, “It won’t happen to me” is a presentation that must be seen by parents and students alike. It is an effective program for delivering a sensitive and hard to hear message- teenagers DO die tragically behind the steering wheel.

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Teenagers, by their very nature, don't like being preached at. Nor do they like assemblies that deliver the same message in very similar ways. Your program, while it addressed a topic they are used to hearing, did so in a unique way and in a manner they had not seen before. Seeing real people and hearing their stories made the message convincing and powerful. The students have seen crashed cars. They've heard the statistics. They've heard the lectures. What they hadn't seen or heard before were the faces and personal accounts of the people who were tragically killed in car accidents. It was a new angle and one which changed the way many of the students view the issue. While I wish that you did not have any material to present (meaning that it wouldn't be an issue that needed to be presented), I am glad that you have taken the time to put together such a powerful program. It is unfortunate that teens die in such tragic ways, but we are fortunate that you have taken their stories and brought them to us. "It Won't Happen to Me" illustrates the reality that "it can happen to" each one of us just as quickly and just as easily as it happened to those whose stories you share. I'm convinced that you saved a life or two that morning. It is now my hope that the students will continue to think about the message you presented and will go on to tell others. I certainly intend to.

Sincerely,

Bob Sears
Upper School Director
Athens Academy