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Portsmouth resident John Dye, who lost his son in a drunken-driving accident, speaks during a Positive Pathways to Prevention meeting Thursday at Portsmouth High School.

Dad whose son died warns teens of DWI

BY JENNIFER FEALS

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PORTSMOUTH—With the Portsmouth High School junior prom scheduled for Saturday — and graduations just around the corner — John Dye doesn't want another family to get a knock on the door from police bearing devastating news. He doesn't want his son's death to be in vain, and he wants parents and the community to take action after

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hearing his family's story.

Dye asked the approximately 60 students, parents, school faculty and community

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members at Thursday's Positive Pathways to Prevention community night to close their eyes and then explained that, on June 23, 2007, he heard that dreaded knock.

There had been an accident at Rye Beach involving a minivan with a young man inside. The man was Dye's son, Jhaime, who after leaving a party at which he'd been drinking alcohol, decided to drive home. He failed to negotiate a curve, and the vehicle hit rocks, sending it flying 50 feet and leaving his battered body in a gully for hours overnight.

Jhaime, 20, who had graduated from Portsmouth High School two years earlier, died immediately from the impact.

Before asking participants

to open their eyes, Dye told them to picture the victim being a daughter, son or best friend. As they opened their eyes — some filled with tears — Dye said, "This is what I deal with every day, because my son chose to negotiate a vehicle after having alcohol in his system.

"My life is changed forever," said Dye, who said he now speaks with local schools, students and families because "it was preventable."

It comes down to taking responsibility and making choices, Dye said. Students need to change their lifestyle, which for some may mean changing their friends. If they're at a party where there are drugs or alcohol, teens need to know it's OK to leave.

Newspaper stories and survey results like the Youth Risk Behavior Survey show students' actions are "out of control," Dye

said. Results show that, within the last 30 days, 45.4 percent of PHS students have had a drink of alcohol, 30 percent had five or more in a row, 27.4 percent used prescription drugs and 36.2 percent smoked marijuana.

Dye, who graduated from PHS, said he is almost embarrassed to admit it.

"This was a place to be proud of; a lot of kids don't think that anymore. It's about choices."

A panel of about eight PHS students told the parents and community members that communication, trust and involvement in kids' lives can help them make better choices. It's best to encourage rather than discourage kids, don't jump to conclusions about their actions, and guide them while letting them make their own decisions, the students said.

Dye wants those decisions to be the safest ones, and he said it



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Audience members react Thursday as John Dye of Portsmouth shares the story of the night his son, Jhaime, died in a drunken-driving accident, during Positive Pathways to Prevention's community resource night at Portsmouth High School.

will take the entire community to make that happen.

"I have a lot of pain and I'm sure you can see it on my face," Dye said. "I'm dying right now

because I want someone to listen to what I have to say and listen to my story and change because of it, not just go back to what you used to do."