

St. Mary's students get the message

By NEIL WELLS
for The Daily Sentinel-Review

Students at St. Mary's High School in Woodstock took part in an assembly Thursday which addressed a serious issue, but did it in a down-to-earth way.

No one said "just say no" or preached.

What students did get, was a pleasantly packaged, informative, anecdote-filled performance they will remember for a while.

London's Garry Whyte, head of Teen Communications, a troupe of teenagers consisting

of a drinking and driving victim, a rap group — complete with dancers — and a singing duet. The newest member of the troupe is Elke Rutherford, a London area writer and journalist.

Each member of the troupe has volunteered their services to help educate students on the perils of excessive drinking, impaired driving and drug abuse.

The troupe travels Canada, presenting the assembly at high schools.

Although students seemed not to know what to expect from the assembly initially, the rap-

pers, followed immediately by Whyte's snappy rapport, soon had the 200-plus students bemused.

Statistics, not speeches, were interspersed during the assembly, allowing students to decide for themselves what road to follow.

An audio-visual segment, titled Rock and Roll Heaven: Dead Teen Idols Don't Do Gigs, seemed to strike a chord with the students.

"It really was a positive message, and the music part helped," said student Natalia Bodnar.