

Pupils listen to experience of murdered girl's father

'Wise up and cut out family heartbreak'

By Lori Little

HOW many times do parents ask their children to always let them know where they are going?

This simple message often gets ignored but students at the IW College were shocked into thinking of their own safety after meeting a father whose daughter was drugged, raped and murdered.

Ryde businessman Tim Blackman reminded the students about his daughter's death in Tokyo in 2000 and gave them sensible advice on how to stay safe by using simple modern technology.

The talk and workshop began with a video showing the Blackman family struggling to deal with events after Lucie's disappearance and their subsequent trip to Tokyo to see the cave where her body was found.

Mr Blackman said: "When you think about your own safety there is always that feeling it won't happen to you and you are not particularly at risk.

"But the video does demonstrate what a complete and utter distress it is for the family. There is all the mental trauma and that just continues.

"It is something you need to carry in your minds when you are going to be a bit rash or you are going out unprepared. Just bear in mind what it would do to your family if something nasty happened."

Mr Blackman told the students about his Safetytext scheme, which allows users to send a mobile phone message to a nominated recipient with details of where they are going, with whom and when they are expected back.

The text is delayed according to however long the user wants, and if it isn't cancelled, the details are deliv-



Tim Blackman, front centre, at the safety event. With him are, back from left, Heidi Back from the Lucie Blackman Trust, Graham Macfarlane, Mark Reed and Matt Searle from the Lucie Blackman Trust. Front are Hayley Ratcliffe, Jessica Morris, Tim Blackman, Fallon Hirst and Natasha Sibbick. 0206-p19580.

ered to the recipient, giving them and the authorities a head start in tracking down a missing person.

Mr Blackman also showed students a safety device available for sale through the trust he has set up, which emits either a piercing sound, lingering smell or a mist of ultra-violet chemicals that temporarily stain an attacker.

They were also shown a tester kit that reveals whether your drink has been spiked.

The talk hit home to the students, many of whom are planning gap-year trips.

Travel and tourism student Harriet Mayne, 18, said: "I think I am going to buy a spray and alarm, because walking alone it can be scary at times, so it would be useful even if it just made you feel better protected.

"The talk definitely made me more aware of my own safety, especially because I am going travelling next year

and hope to eventually move abroad."

Her friend Joanne Knowles, also 18, agreed.

"Living on the Island you don't really think about your safety much and probably aren't aware of how much bad stuff goes on. I have got a rape alarm but I never even take it out with me," she said.

Fellow travel and tourism student Carla Snellgrove, 25, has already done some back-packing and thinks young

people should be armed with safety advice before they set off.

"I could have done with a talk like this before I went travelling and I think it is good to speak to students doing these courses about keeping safe."

The IW College is holding a safety week in May.

The Lucie Blackman Trust is on www.lucieblackmantrust.org.