

Subject: DRIVE SMART Quarterly Newsletter



DRIVE SMART
Virginia
Newsletter



CLICK IT OR TICKET.



Your Partner in Highway Safety

August 2008

Dear Highway Safety Partners,



As we move forward with our mission of reducing the number of crashes on Virginia roadways in 2008, we must remember how important it is to work together to make this happen. Our collective goal must be to strive to bring a change in driver attitudes. We know that as technology advances, so do the safety advantages of both our vehicles and our roadways. We also know that crashes continue to occur, and that they are largely caused by human error. Thank you for your commitment to working together to change attitudes and affect change.



6th Annual DRIVE SMART Virginia Golf Tournament

September 23, 2008

Plans for the 6th Annual DRIVE SMART Golf Tournament are now in the works. The golf tournament will be held at Independence Golf Club just outside of Richmond, on September 23, 2008. Independence Golf Club was the site of the 2007 Virginia Open. The tournament will once again benefit our teen driving initiative. Opportunities to support this effort start at \$100. Spread the word and join us for a day of golfing to help save teen lives. Contact DRIVE SMART at 804-340-2870 for more information.

Be a HERO
Be a designated driver

These individuals support sponsor of the HERO Campaign for Designated Drivers. Bill Elliott, a 23 year old Naval Academy graduate, was killed by a drunk driver in 2000. This campaign honors his life and promotes designated driving as a safe means to enjoy an evening out with friends.

If you sign up to be a designated driver your soft drinks will be on us for the house! Be the HERO and join our efforts to make sure that everyone enjoys a safe night out with friends.

HERO Campaign
It's a great driver

DSV Partners with DMV in the HERO Campaign

DRIVE SMART Virginia joined the Department of Motor Vehicles in launching the Virginia Hero Campaign for Designated Drivers on August 21. Governor Tim Kaine voiced his strong support of the campaign and noted the courage of its founders, Bill and Carolyn Elliott. The Elliott's founded HERO following the death of their son due to a drunk driver. Virginia is the 3rd state in the Nation to adopt the campaign.

The mission of the HERO Campaign is to eliminate drunk driving. DRIVE SMART is committed to reminding everyone that a healthy and safe night out is not complete without a designated driver.

HERO has partnered with the Virginia Hospitality and Travel Association to bring the campaign to the point of

sale - all establishments selling alcohol in Virginia. HERO will also be partnering with colleges and universities, sports venues, local and state government agencies and law enforcement to make designated driving the new way to stay safe and enjoy an evening out.

Thus far, the campaign has recruited more than 40 restaurants and bars throughout Virginia who have pledged to provide soft drinks and coffee free of charge to patrons who identify themselves as designated drivers. If you would like to get involved, please visit our website at www.drivesmartva.org.

Distracted Driving Events A GREAT Success

During the week of April 30, events across the Commonwealth brought attention to the nationwide problem of distracted drivers on our highways.



Geico Insurance got out the message in Virginia Beach at 14 locations. Annette Hilliard, chairperson of Geico's event said, "We had a presence at 3 Navy Credit Union locations, 8 high schools, an Enterprise Rent-a Car location and 3 car dealerships. The attendance at those locations were over 9,400."

"Teens were the target audience but we reached a large number of adult commuters via advertising at Harbor Park, Amerigroup, and the dealerships." stated Hilliard.

According to a recent study by the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute, 80% of all crashes and 60% of all near crashes involve distracted driving within three seconds of the incident.

Mary Ann Rayment, Occupant Protection/Media Coordinator for the Virginia Highway Safety Office said "

I also attended the employee activities at GEICO Insurance. They are wonderful partners and always do a wonderful job, and while I did not attend the high school events that they did, I know that they were all successful."

In Henrico County, Nationwide Insurance partnered with Nascar, Henrico County Public Schools, DMV and DRIVE SMART for an event at Hermitage High School. Nascar drivers Clint Bowyer and Landon Cassill offered words of advice and encouragement to teens. Their message focused on discouraging text messaging while behind the wheel.

Some students had the opportunity to race against Clint in the Nascar race simulator. Later, others were given the chance to race against themselves while texting and then with their full attention on driving. The students noted the significant improvement in their driving skill when they put down the phone and focused on driving.

These were just a few of the events held throughout the Commonwealth to recognize Distracted Driving Awareness Day, with more than 75 partners supporting the initiative. Janet Brooking, DRIVE SMART Virginia's Executive Director, said "All the partners hope that drivers will cut down on their distractions while driving, understand that that buckling up is the best defense against another distracted driver, and take the job of driving seriously."

Plan now to get involved in the 2009 Distracted Driving Awareness Day.



Reader's Digest: Special Report: The Dangers of Teen Driving

Car crashes are the No. 1 killer of teens. It's time to take action.

By Joseph K. Vetter with Fran Lostys

Warning: Teen Drivers

· Kylie Grayden, 17, of Shorewood, Minnesota, glanced at her iPod while driving with her cousin and a friend, both 17. When she veered off the road and flipped her car into a ditch, she and her friend were killed.

· Heading home from practice, Jonathan Chapman, a 16-year-old high school basketball player from La Plata, Maryland, was reportedly speeding when his car rammed an SUV. He and three friends, ages 14 to 16, were killed.

· Five days after graduating from high school, Bailey Goodman, 17, of Fairport, New York, and four classmates were on their way to her family's cottage. Moments after text messages were exchanged on Bailey's cell phone, she slammed into an oncoming truck. All five teens were killed.

16: A RISKY AGE

The crash rate for 16-year-olds is nearly double the rate for 19-year-olds. More than 5,000 teenagers die in car accidents every year. "If we saw these numbers coming back from a war zone, it would be on the front page every day," says Vincent Leibell, a state senator from New York, where some 200 teens died in crashes in 2006.

The numbers aren't budging. Fatalities did drop from the mid-'70s through the early '90s, mainly because of tougher seat belt and drunk driving laws. But since then, the statistics have remained stubbornly high, despite improved safety features in cars.

Some of this is due to teens themselves. "Anytime you have immaturity combined with inexperience, you have the potential for disaster," says Nicole Nason, head of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. "And that's what you get with a 16-year-old behind the wheel."

But that's not the whole story. Speed, distraction, and driver inexperience cause most crashes-and those things can be controlled. "These deaths should not be considered an inevitable part of the teen experience," says Justin McNaull, director of state relations for AAA. "We can change this." Here are three steps that will prevent crashes and save countless lives -- of teens and others on the road.

1. TEACH YOUR KIDS

Part of the reason for teens' poor judgment is hardwired: The brain's prefrontal cortex-which handles tasks like controlling impulses-isn't fully formed. "Our brains get tons of input from multiple places," says Flaura Winston, MD, scientific director of the Center for Injury Research and Prevention at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. "Adults don't act on all those impulses; we sort them. But teens have a hard time doing this." And they have a hard time understanding what's risky in a car. In a recent study, researchers surveyed 5,600 teens and found huge gaps in their knowledge.

One problem is that teens fail to see certain behaviors as dangerous. Only 28 percent said using a cell phone is a risk, and 10 percent said the same about having other teens in the car. (They're both big distractions, and boys in the car are more distracting than girls.) Only half cited speeding or not wearing a seat belt. Even if teens got the right idea about a behavior-for instance, 87 percent said drinking and driving is dangerous-they didn't view it as their problem: Only 16 percent said they ever see it happen. (Some might be lying; 25 percent of young drivers killed in crashes had been drinking.)

The message for parents: Spell out the dangers for your kids. It's up to you because only 20 percent of schools offer driver ed today, down from 90 percent in the 1980s. Nason says, "You have a responsibility to make sure your child isn't going to drive into someone else head-on because he's busy chatting on his cell phone and nobody's told him, 'Hang up the phone and drive the car.' "

2. FIGHT FOR STRICTER STATE LAWS

"You don't suddenly become a good driver when you turn 16," Nason says. "We need to ease teens into a lifelong habit of good driving."

That's the goal of graduated driver licensing laws, which impose restrictions before teens earn a full license. An ideal law would set the minimum age for a permit at 16, limit passengers to one, ban cell phones, prohibit driving between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m., and not allow a full license until age 18.

These laws make sense. A recent study by Johns Hopkins University for the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety found that a tough phase-in law could decrease deaths among 16-year-old drivers by 38 percent. "It's clear that giving young drivers more time behind the wheel with supervision makes a big difference," says Susan Baker, the study's coauthor.

That was the case in Georgia, where a graduated licensing law slashed fatal crashes involving 16-year-old drivers by 37 percent over five years and cut speeding-related fatal crashes among the same age group by nearly half. The law also imposes stiff penalties -- including having a license taken away for up to a year-for speeding, reckless driving, and other serious errors.

Currently, 47 states have phase-in laws, but few are as effective as they could be. Only eight set the minimum age for a permit at 16. Fewer than ten prohibit driving after 10 p.m. And only 12 have strict limits on passengers. Kansas State Senator Phil Journey pushed for a bill to impose nighttime, passenger, and cell phone restrictions on teen drivers, but it failed in his state's House of Representatives. He says the costs of refusing to act are obvious: "Statistically, we know that somebody's going to leave home and is not going to survive because this bill didn't become law."

Find out how to lobby for tough laws in your state.

The main obstacle is the belief that stricter measures impinge on parents' right to decide when and with whom their kids drive. The reasons for the complaints vary: Some parents want their teens to run errands unaccompanied; others want their kids to drive a farm truck as soon as possible. (That's what sank the Kansas bill.)

Vermont State Representative Kathy Lavoie, the mother of two teens, supports some limitations but balks at a nighttime restriction that would prevent kids from driving to hunting grounds in the early morning, which teens in her state enjoy. "When it comes to an infringement on parental rights, I get nervous," she says.

Nason of the traffic safety administration has heard these objections before. "Fear of the 'nanny state' always rears its head," she says. "But a car crash doesn't just affect the person in the car. It affects the people in the car they hit." Add in the costs to law enforcement and health care, she notes, and it's hard to argue against putting society's interests ahead of parents' rights. In a recent study, AAA found that teen crashes cost the rest of us more than \$34 billion annually.

Bradford Hill, the Massachusetts state representative who sponsored legislation that cut speeding by 33 percent and reduced serious-injury crashes by more than 40 percent, said most parents in his state support the law. "They say, 'I'm so glad these changes were made,'" he says.

Some teens feel the same way. In New York, 18-year-old David Mangano of White Plains sees the value in his state's law that limits teen passengers to two. "If you have a lot of people in the car, it's really hectic," he says, "so it's nice to have that restriction."

3. GET TOUGH AT HOME

Even if your state has weak laws, you can still set the rules for your own teen. "You're the parent," says AAA's McNaull. "You control when your child gets licensed, you control the keys, and you control the car. You can put significant conditions in place."

Start by making sure your teen always wears a seat belt. "It's the single most effective safety device in your car," says Nason. But more than half of teen drivers killed on the road in 2006 weren't buckled up.

You can also lay down your own phase-in law. Set your teen's night driving limit to no later than 10 p.m., don't allow more than one passenger, and ban cell phones-even with a headset. "Using a phone with a headset is of no benefit to an inexperienced driver," says University of Utah researcher David Strayer.

If your teen balks? Too bad, says Arthur Kellermann, MD, an emergency room physician who's also an injury-prevention researcher at Emory University and the father of a 20-year-old. "This is tough love," he says.

Nicole Nason agrees: "Every time you say, 'You don't start this car without a seat belt on, you can't drive late at night, this is not the party mobile,' you are saving your children's lives."

Which States Have the Toughest Laws?

In a first-ever analysis, we examined each state's graduated driver licensing, seat belt, and DUI laws and awarded points based on strictness. (Alaska gets more points in the seat belt category because anyone 16 and older who isn't buckled up can be fined; New Hampshire gets fewer because it has no seat belt laws at all.)

BEST

Alaska, California, Delaware, Washington, Illinois, Maine, Indiana, Oregon, Hawaii, Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, District of Columbia

GOOD

New Jersey, Connecticut, New York, Nebraska, Maryland, Oklahoma, Colorado, Tennessee, Alabama, Missouri, Louisiana, Utah

FAIR

Massachusetts, Vermont, Michigan, Ohio, Iowa, Virginia, Wisconsin, Pennsylvania, New Mexico, Texas, West Virginia, Arizona, Florida, Nevada

WORST

New Hampshire, Kansas, Wyoming, South Carolina, Mississippi, North Dakota, Minnesota, Idaho, Rhode Island, South Dakota, Montana, Arkansas

The Teen Death Toll

States with the toughest driving laws tend to have lower fatality rates, but other factors count too. Rural roads (with higher speed limits, less traffic, and fewer nearby medical services) are a big crash risk. The following is a list of the top 10 states in teen-driving fatalities per 100,000 kids.

Wyoming 42.6, Mississippi 42.1, Montana 40.2, Alabama 39.8, Arkansas 37.5, Missouri 37.4, S. Dakota 36.9, Tennessee 36.4, Kentucky 35, Oklahoma 33.8

From Reader's Digest - August 2008

Upcoming Events

August 15 - September 1 2008 Drunk Driving National Crackdown

August 26-27 Virginia Tech Naturalistic Driving Methods and Analyses Symposium

September 14-16 Virginia Sherrif's Association Conference, Roanoke

September 21-27 National Child Passenger Safety Week

September 23 6th Annual DRIVE SMART Golf Tournament

September 24th DRIVE SMART Virginia Fall Board Meeting

September 30th Traffic Safety Strategies for the Workplace, Germanna

October 6-10 Drive Safely Work Week

October 19-25 National Teen Driver Safety Week

Visit Our Website at...

www.drivesmartva.org

804-340-2870

Contact Information

Sammy Carr, Public Relations and Outreach Manager

757-377-9395

sammy.drivesmart@verizon.net

