

Parents Can Instill Safer Driving Habits

by Irena Granaas

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for U.S. teens, and the numbers have been on the rise in recent months, according to a recent report by the Government Highway Safety Association.

In fact, according to the most recent data from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, nearly 5,000 U.S. teens die annually in traffic accidents.

But, say experts at Ford, parents can help reduce these fatalities. According to research done for Ford's Driving Skills for Life (DSFL) program, teens tend to emulate the driving habits of their parents.

And, more than 75 percent of teens and tweens surveyed report they rely heavily on parental advice when they begin driving.

"By setting a good example behind the wheel, parents can increase the chances their children will adopt safe driving practices," said Jim Vella, president, Ford Motor Company Fund and Community Services, which sponsors DSFL programs.

"While state laws and educational programs are critical, ultimately, parents are the most critical component to keep their teen drivers safe."

Ford experts recommend that parents of teens who are nearly old enough to start driving or who have begun driving consider these tips:

- Talk to your teens about driving and safe driving behaviors. Let them know unsafe actions will not be tolerated.

- Buckle up when behind the wheel. Studies show that if parents don't wear seat belts, teens are more likely to go unbelted, which puts them at much greater risk of death or serious injuries.

- Don't speed. Research done by Ford DSFL shows this is another habit teens tend to imitate. Excessive speed continues to be a factor in about one-third of all traffic deaths nationally.

- Avoid driving while distracted. Don't talk or text on cell phones or perform other distracting tasks while at the wheel. Parents need to model a firm "no distractions" driving style for teens, and let them know distracted driving will not be tolerated.

- Don't tailgate. Parents need to keep the proper distance from the car in front of them to show teens how to avoid rear-end collisions, which are all too common



A teen learns hands-on driving skills at a recent DSFL training event.

and nearly always preventable.

- Continually scan ahead for potential hazards – Parents need to show teens how to be alert to what's going on around them by scanning to the right and left as they drive.

- Limit the number of passengers when a teen is learning to drive. Research indicates that new drivers can be easily distracted with the addition of just one passenger. Parents need to be aware, and if in a state that restricts the number of passengers while a teen has been issued an early license or permit, they must ensure their teen follows the rules.

- Never drink and drive. Parents should strongly convey that drinking and driving will not be tolerated.

Proper training is another aspect to reducing deaths among young, inexperienced drivers. Now in its 10th year, the Ford DSFL program uses a combination of hands-on and interactive methods of improving students' safe driving skills.

"Research shows that teens lack the experience required to be safe drivers, so Ford's Driving Skills for Life provides the next step in the learning process to make them safer drivers. If we can save one life, we've been successful," said Jim Graham, manager, Ford Driving Skills for Life.

For 2013, Ford plans to double the number of students it reaches with its hands-on driving programs to 40,000. This will involve visits to at least 40 high schools in Arizona, California, Illinois, Michigan, Oklahoma, Tennessee, Texas and Virginia.

Programs offer multiple activities focused on common driving challenges faced by teen drivers. Students will be able to experience real-life driving situations in a controlled environment using specially equipped vehicles.

Ford Safety Communications Manager Kelli Felker said there

are 30 schools vying to be part of the hands-on Ford Driving Skills for Life program that will be going on at the end of April (25-26). She explained there are programs going on in those schools right now that are aimed at getting teens to be safer drivers. The schools that are judged to have the best programs will be invited to Dearborn for the hands on DSFL experience.

The DSFL hands-on clinics feature professional drivers, and activities that help teens build skill in five critical driving areas: Driver distraction, space management, speed management, vehicle handling and hazard recognition.

"People are very supportive of this," said Felker. "The bottom line is, parental involvement is absolutely key. We really encourage parents to get involved, both in DSFL and with their teen's driving, because it really makes a difference."

As the mother of a driving-age teenager herself, Felker has seen students walk into the DSFL program like a typical teen, thinking they know it all. "But once they get behind the wheel," she said, "they realize they don't know – they're forced into situations that are very real world but it's in a very safe environment."

Buick Names First Five Winners of Scholarship

The Buick Achievers Scholarship Program has announced the first five of 100 U.S. high school and undergraduate college students that will receive up to \$25,000 in annual scholarships for demonstrating excellence in the classroom and in the community.

Funded by the General Motors Foundation and established in 2011, Buick Achievers is one of the largest scholarship programs in the country. The program provides 100 students with up to \$25,000 renewable for four years, and one additional year for those entering a qualified, five-year engineering program. Additionally, 1,000 students receive a one-time \$2,000 award. To date, Buick Achievers has awarded nearly \$12 million to more than 2,100 college-bound students.

"With the current U.S. student loan debt hovering around \$1 trillion, the impact the Buick Achievers Scholarship will have on these students is immeasurable," said GM Foundation President Vivian Pickard. "For some, they will be the first in their family to attend college and this program will provide an opportunity to pursue an academic career without the related financial pressures."

With the future of manufacturing and many other industries driven by new technologies, the Buick Achievers Scholarship Program supports students interested in pursuing careers in science, technology, engineering, math, also known as STEM, information technology and other fields related to the automotive industry.

"The combination of academic achievement and community leadership exhibited by these

Buick Achievers underscores the core values of this scholarship," said Tony DiSalle, U.S. vice president, Buick Marketing. "Supporting students interested in a STEM major or career is essential for the growth in our industry and we applaud these future innovators and leaders for their commitment."

Featured during the Buick Human Highlight Reel Show that showcases inspirational stories of former student athletes and future leaders and innovators, the first five recipients of the 2013 Buick Achievers Scholarship Program include Donald Chao of Bellevue, Wash., who plans to attend the University of Michigan and major in mechanical engineering.

Nicole Kennard of Acworth, Ga., plans to attend Georgia Institute of Technology in the fall and major in Materials Engineering.

Sharnique Smith of Memphis, Tenn., will attend the University of Mississippi in the fall. A senior at Arlington High School in Arlington, Tenn., she has participated in numerous community service projects through her involvement in the Teenage Improvement Club.

Devin Willis of Chateaugay, N.Y., is set to attend Clarkson University in Potsdam, N.Y., with plans to major in chemical engineering. His list of volunteer activities includes work at the local humane society, food pantry, blood drives and Operation Christmas Child.

Benjamin Zavala of Pittsburgh attends the University of Cincinnati, majoring in Transportation Design. Benjamin's passion for cars has led to his participation in numerous automotive design competitions.

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