

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

Volume 43, Issue 03

July 2003

Published by the National Safety Commission for Teens and their Parents

Providing a solid BASE for Teen Drivers by Improving Behavior, Attitude, Skills, and Experience

Memorial for Teen who was Killed while Trying to Pass Five Cars

Jessica Alexis Hughes, 16, just wanted to surf at Vilano Beach. She was riding with her friend, 16 year old Justin Forehand, when she lost her life.

Justin was driving on May 11th when he attempted to pass five vehicles. The accident that followed killed Jessica instantly. Justin has been charged with vehicular homicide.

Jessica had enjoyed sports most of her life. In 2002, she made the Clay High School Junior Varsity team, coached by her mother. This year, Jessica would have been a starter on the varsity squad. Due to her tragic death, the Clay Classic has been renamed the Jessica Hughes Memorial Classic.

For the past seven years, Clay High School has hosted a three-day preseason softball tournament. Now, the tournament has a new meaning.

In addition to renaming the tournament, Clay High School has planted a tree in Jessica's honor. "That first pitch was pretty hard," said teammate Karri Clayton. "But, as I was fighting back the tears, I remembered how Jess constantly gave one-hundred and ten percent. And I remember her smiles..."

"This game is uplifting to me," said teammate Tiffany Thomas. "I am remembering her smile. She was so sweet, it was incredible. Her memory gives us more reason to play." Clay High School also placed a plaque with Jessica's name and jersey number in the shape of a softball at the field.

In honor of his daughter, Mr. Hughes purchased the new uniforms for the varsity squad along with left black arm bands. Mr. Hughes also drove to Clay High School from his home in Tampa to throw out the first pitch. "That was pretty tear-jerking," said Mr. Hughes. "As devastating a loss as this has been for me, as well as other members of her family, I want to do all I can to keep her memory alive...I was able to talk to her on the phone for about ten minutes before her friend, who was driving, tried to pass five cars. She was killed instantly. There is a state marker where she died, on FL 16, near the World Golf Village."

In an attempt to make a difference, Mr. Hughes is currently calling for Florida to increase the legal driving age. Some of Jessica's friends have also raised money to go towards Jessica's favorite charity.

Clay High School's principal summed it up best when he said, "...Through tragedy, life goes on. The spirit and life of Jessica Alexis Hughes lives on at Clay High."

Source *The Florida Times Union*

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ROTC Student Dies in Crash

A seatbelt could not save Kathryn Alice Paff's life. Kathryn, 16, died and two of her friends were hospitalized after her Kia skidded off the road.

The vehicle then smashed into a parked car, ricocheted into a fence, and came to a stop in a grassy field. Kathryn died at the scene.

Kathryn was a sophomore at Ridgewood High School and an active participant in ROTC. Many students from Ridgewood have visited the Paff's home to offer condolences. Mrs. Paff hopes that Kathryn is remembered for her compassion. "I think the best thing to say was she didn't dislike anybody," said Kathryn's mother.

Source *the St. Petersburg Times*

Parents are Worried (as they should) about Teen Driving

Chrysler Group, a division of Daimler Chrysler AG, conducted a national survey in February to find out what teenagers' parents worry about. The result...parents are worried about their teenagers' driving.

59% of the parents surveyed said that driving related issues were top on their list of concerns. Safe driving was followed by drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and pregnancy or sexually transmitted diseases. They were also concerned about violent crime, drinking and driving, speeding, illness, peer pressure, war and suicide.

Surprisingly, even though parents are concerned about safe driving and correctly identified car crashes as the leading cause of death for teens, they let their teens participate in risky driving behavior. Even though more than 50% of teen crashes happen at night, 79% of the parents surveyed admitted that they allow their teens to drive between 9 p.m. and midnight unsupervised. Also, 19% reported that they allow their teens to drive unsupervised between midnight and 6 a.m.

Another staggering statistic is that 67% of parents allow their teens to drive with multiple teens in the car. Unfortunately, 63% of crashes resulting in teen deaths take place when there is more than one teen in the car.

Source *the Orlando Sentinel*

Teen Faces Charges after Hit and Run Death

Dustin Wayne Alexander, 18, struck an unidentified man on February 20th and fled the scene. Three hours later, Dustin notified police of the hit and run. The pedestrian later died.

Captain Forrest Currie said, "[Dustin] hasn't been charged yet, but he turned himself in. We're waiting on some toxicology reports, but he will be charged later."

Now, Dustin could face jail time, fines and community service.

When Dustin was contacted for a statement he simply said, "It was an accident, and that's all anybody needs to know."

Source *The Orlando Sentinel*

Teen Falls Off of Car and Suffers Brain Damage

Several students were hanging out in the Deltona High School parking lot last August 5th waiting for the gate to be opened. Ashley Dillingham, 15, perched herself atop her sisters' car while waiting. Once the gate was opened, Ashley's sister told her to get in the car. When she refused, Ashley's sister pulled forward.

When the driver let out the clutch, the car jerked forward causing Ashley to fall off of the vehicle. Due to her injuries, Ashley has suffered brain damage.

Originally, doctors were concerned that Ashley might not be able to speak or use the right side of her body again. Since the accident, Ashley has recovered enough to begin attending school again part time.

Source *the Orlando Sentinel*

Teen Lucky To Be Alive After Flipping SUV

Eric Allen Downey, 17, stole a GMC Jimmy SUV after breaking out of the Center for Drug-Free Living's Adolescent Residential Campus. Eric had been ordered by a judge to stay at the facility. When the owner of the SUV reported the vehicle stolen, the police chase began.

Several deputies chased the teen down a series of roads in the Kissimmee area. During the pursuit, one of the SUV's tires was deflated by a police "stop stick".

The deputies were forced to set up a road block with their patrol cars while two other squad cars corralled Eric towards the road block. The SUV plowed into the two police cars and flipped over before coming to a stop.

No one was seriously injured in the crash, but Eric was arrested. The young man has been charged with felony charges and is presently residing in a juvenile detention center.

Source *The Orlando Sentinel*

While Fleeing Police, Teen Crashes and Dies; Injuring Two

A Lantana police officer attempted to pull over the car that Alfredo Sanchez, 16, was driving on February 5th. Alfredo and the other two teens in the vehicle were under suspicion of drug possession. When the officer flashed his lights at the teens near Lantana Road, Alfredo fled.

The Lantana police officer chased Alfredo up I-95 and radioed the West Palm Beach police department as the vehicle sped out of the Lantana jurisdiction. As Alfredo tried to pass through the intersection of Parker Avenue and Nottingham Boulevard, the Lantana officer plowed into the front driver's panel of Alfredo's vehicle, ending the pursuit.

After the accident, Alfredo and his two friends were taken to area hospitals. Five days later, Alfredo is dead, one of his friends was released from the hospital, and the third passenger is still in critical condition.

Source *the Palm Beach Post*

Teen With Learners Permit Flips Car; Hurts Himself and Causes Damage

Leslie Mateo, 17, licensed with only a learner permit, was driving illegally on March 5th when he flipped his car. Florida law requires that teens with a learner permit must be accompanied by a licensed drivers at least 21 years of age or older who is occupying the front passenger's seat. Leslie chose to drive alone.

Leslie was reported speeding when he lost control of his Ford Mustang, jumping the curb of the Kentucky Fried Chicken parking lot and flipping his convertible. When Leslie final came to a stop, he had hit two parked trucks and a car that was attempting to enter the parking lot. Leslie was injured in the accident and flown by helicopter to a local hospital. Luckily, no one else was hurt.

Leslie is currently charged with driver's license violation and reckless driving.

Source *The St. Petersburg Times*

Teen in Critical Condition after Falling Off of Moving Vehicle

Stacie Lott, 17, was driving around the Jefferson High School parking lot with her best friend, Stephanie Hughes, 18, sitting on top of the trunk. When Stacie turned a corner, Stephanie fell off. Stephanie's head hit the pavement with such force that she is now listed in critical condition at St. Joseph's Hospital.

Teen Falls off Vehicle...

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This is not the first time that an incident such as this has happened in Florida.

Stephanie still has not been able to speak. One witness said to Stacie, "You peeled right out." Stacie denies the accusation and states that she was only going five miles per hour.

The incident is currently under investigation. It has been reported that Stacie does not have a valid driver's license and did not have permission to drive her mother's vehicle.

Source the St. Petersburg Times

Teens in Stolen Car, Crash into Tree and Die

What do Candice Jennerich, 15, Rashad Golden, 14, and Dortez Bizzell, 14, have in common?...All three died after their stealing spree ended with their vehicle crashing into a tree.

Rashad and Dortez picked up Candice and her friend early on March 3rd. After taking Candice's friend home, the trio went to several different apartment complex parking lots looking for items to steal.

Shortly before 5 a.m. on Monday, a person from the Queensmark Apartments reported to police that teens in a red Neon were checking car doors. When an officer arrived at the apartments, the trio sped off.

The officer pursued the Neon until their speed reach 65 mph at which point the officer slowed down and ended the chase.

Dortez, who was driving, sped up and lost control of the Neon. He slammed the vehicle into a tree at approximately 80 mph. The impact was so great that the engine flew out of the vehicle.

The joy ride was over, and all three of the teens were killed on impact.

Source the St. Petersburg Times

Teen Takes Eyes off Road reaching for CD and Dies

Maurice Adams, 17, died on March 5th after injuries sustained in a head on collision.

On February 4th, the popular senior was headed home from school when he took his eyes off of the road to retrieve a CD that had fallen on the floor. As he leaned over, Maurice accidentally veered into oncoming traffic.

He slammed directly into a school bus and suffered massive injuries.

His condition improved initially, but he lost his battle on Wednesday.

Besides being a football player, Maurice was involved in drama. The football coach, Coach Davis said, "In every class I had, there were kids crying. One thing school and education doesn't teach is how to deal with death."

Maurice will be greatly missed.

Source the St. Petersburg Times

Three Teens Ejected when SUV Flips; One Dies

At approximately 5:40 p.m. on March 2nd, a gray Isuzu Rodeo ran off the road and down an embankment, flipping several times before coming to a stop. Three unbelted teens were ejected from the vehicle and one, Luke Streng, 16, died at the scene.

A witness stated, "It seems like [the teens] were talking, and, for some reason, [Robert] ran off the road and hit the [rumble strips]. He overcorrected, and it sent the truck rolling down the embankment." Driver, Robert Lance, 17, and passenger, Andrew Blake, 17, were life flighted to a near by hospital. Andrew was discharged on March 6th and Robert is still in the hospital.

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