

May is National Teen Safe Driving Month

Our community is mourning the loss of another teen to a motor vehicle accident, the third in two years. Another young life cut short and the lives of parents, siblings, friends and neighbors changed forever. With each tragedy, we lost a piece of our future and the potential for greatness.

A Facebook friend recently posted the question, "How much more can our small town take?" My answer is short and simple, not much and I follow that answer with several new questions. What have we done to educate our teen drivers? What more can we do to help prepare our youth for such a huge responsibility?

Preventable motor vehicle crashes caused by teen drivers are the leading cause of death for teens in America today. The tragic facts: Nearly 5,000 young people die in car crashes every year. Another 300,000 teens are injured in car crashes each year. Crash risk is particularly high during the first years that teenagers are eligible to drive. The top five driver-related factors for teenage drivers involved in fatal motor vehicle crashes include: Driving too fast, running off the road, driving in the wrong lane, driving under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or medication, erratic, reckless or distracted driving.

Each year, the Local Wellness Committee and the health department at CRHS provide some kind of programming for the students, this year is no exception. On May 6th, a P.E.E.R.S portable road simulator will be at the high school which realistically demonstrates the dangers of driving under the influence. There will also be a dedication station where students can pledge never to drink and drive. On May 28th, the Durham Volunteer Fire Company will be on campus to conduct a mock crash drill.

Congratulations to Brian MacDuff (student director) and Taylor Lauretti who placed 2nd in the CT DMV Teens Tackle the Issue of Distracted Driving Safe Driving Video Contest. You can view their video at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pmmzk_E1GVA which will also be aired on CBS stations. This is the second year in a row that a team of students from CRHS has placed in the top three!

A new club has been formed at CRHS called Teens in the Driver's Seat, a national program that started in Texas that is a peer to peer approach to promote safe driving. This group is working closely with health teacher Ms. Bertz. Also, according to Health teacher, Mr. Bajoros, our students have been submitting excellent Natural High Video Projects to the Natural High/Sundt Memorial Foundation throughout the school year. There is a buzz about www.naturalhigh.org currently going around CRHS. It seems the Health Education program is having a positive impact on student behavior and choices.

Even with all these constructive programs planned, I ask the question again; what more can we do to help prepare our youth for such a huge responsibility? If you have any ideas or know of other successful programs, please contact me or the health teachers mentioned above. This topic will be discussed at the next Local Wellness Committee meeting on May 3rd, 12:30 at the Central Office, BOE. We are always looking for more community involvement. After all, it is our collective responsibility to help protect our most precious asset, our youth.

