

## Drive2Life PSA Contest Puts Focus on Risks of Speeding

Teens nationwide are invited to enter the 17th annual Drive2Life PSA Contest, with this year's theme of speeding. NRSF sponsors Drive2Life with the American Driver & Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA), which represents the nation's driver education instructors. ADTSEA has created a complete teaching program around the dangers of speeding, offered free for classroom use to support language arts, health, media and communication lessons. It can easily be incorporated into activities by school clubs.

"We are looking for creative ideas for a 30-second public service announcement that lets people understand the risks of speeding" said Michelle Anderson of The National Road Safety Foundation. Speeding accounts for about 29 percent of all fatal crashes in the U.S. NHTSA reports that 11,775 people died in speeding-related crashes in 2023, with hundreds of thousands of injuries and an estimated annual cost in the billions.

The winner of Drive2Life will receive \$2,000 and an expenses-paid trip to New York to work with an Emmy



Award-winning producer to turn his or her idea into a PSA that will air nationwide on more than 170 TV stations on the nationally-syndicated program "Teen Kids News" next May during Global Youth Traffic Safety Month. In addition, two runners-up will each receive \$500, and the teachers of the winner and runners-up will each receive a \$100 gift card. Entries, which must be received by March 23, 2026, will be judged by NRSF staff and a blue-ribbon panel of driver education teachers from ADTSEA.

Contest information, entry form, prize details and last year's winning video are available by visiting [www.nrsf.org/contests/drive2life](http://www.nrsf.org/contests/drive2life).

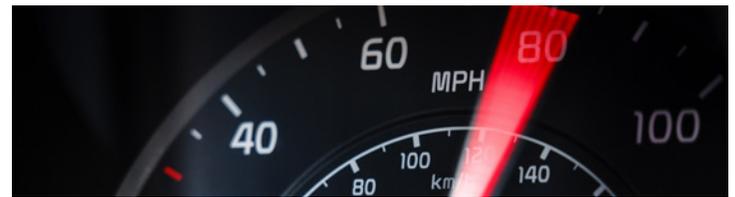
## NRSF Supports GHSA on a New Multi-Faceted Program on Speeding

NRSF is supporting a new program to deal with the persistent issue of speeding.

Despite efforts to educate drivers about the dangers of speeding, backed by decades of enforcement, many drivers seem to think of speeding as something we all do, with the consequences of being caught as simply a ticket and a fine. In reality, speeding kills –it's a factor in 29 percent of all fatal crashes nationwide, according to NHTSA, which reports 11,775 died in speed-related crashes in 2023.

With NRSF support, GHSA is beginning a pilot project that we hope can put a significant dent in the horrific speeding statistics. The project will focus on Intelligent Speed Assistance (ISA) technology to help change the social norm.

In partnership with FCCLA, SCRAM/LifeSafer will install its intelligent speed assistance devices in the cars of about 30 families nationwide, for use by new teen drivers. The ISA device actively prevents vehicles from speeding beyond



pre-set limits, while helping beginners develop safer driving habits. Data gathered from the pilot project will show the device's impact in changing the teen drivers' behavior and perception of speeding.

The NRSF-funded project will also involve collaboration with SteerSafe Partnership and GHSA to develop a guidebook for State Highway Safety Offices that supports implementation of ISA programs. The guidebook will outline how SHSOs can educate key stakeholders (i.e., law enforcement, prosecutors, judges, elected officials, and the media) and encourage them to conduct public education campaigns that explain how ISA works and the potential it holds for addressing chronic speeders and teen drivers, who are overrepresented in speeding-related fatal crashes.





I feel like I am drowning, but I am not in water. Grief and loss can do that to a person. The problem is there is no life jacket. So how do people go through loss with no safety net in sight?

I cope with my loss by advocating. My drowning began with the 100% preventable death of my husband and 5-year-old. One single bad decision by a man, driving while under the influence, led to the biggest challenge of my life. Here I am 10 years later, still struggling to breathe; yet fighting to prevent car crashes so others don't drown with me.

February 22, 2016 is the day my life changed for the worst. Waking up that day was like any other, next to my husband, getting my daughters ready for school. If only I knew how the day would end, I would have hugged my family longer and probably never let them go again. I left the house kissing my husband goodbye for the last time, looking at my daughter's dazzling blue eyes for the last time. "I love you, see you later" leaving my mouth.

Around 4pm my phone rang. "Are you Tim O'Donnell's wife?" A voice almost completely robotic said to me. "Yes I am," I said, panic rising. "Stay where you are, detectives are coming to get you." And with that my world started to tilt." Detectives? Why are they coming to get me? Is Tim okay? What is going on?" My head was racing as I waited, only for it to continue after being picked up by detectives.

The car rolled up to the hospital, where my nightmare began. I was taken to a cold sterile room, all to come face to face with the horrific sight. My 5-year-old daughter. My Bridget Mary Riu O'Donnell. Her dazzling blue eyes. My warm and confident baby, laying still and ice cold, extremely hard to recognize, dead on the table. I could only identify my baby through her distinctive blue eyes. The eyes I fought against cancer for, now staring back at me lifeless. I never did get to identify my husband, nor did I see him that fateful day, since his former high school students, who were now the first responders at the scene of the crash, did the honor of identifying their former teacher. The sound that came from me next was



## I Feel Like I Am Drowning

Pam O'Donnell  
Founder, The Catch You Later Foundation



One single bad decision by a man, driving while under the influence, led to the biggest challenge of my life.

a sound only found in horror movies. Only this is not a movie, this was becoming my life. Eventually a doctor explained to me that my husband and daughter were killed on impact in a car crash. The crash was caused by a man on drugs, who I later found out had been stopped by a police officer who failed to fulfill her oath by arresting him. The thought that crossed my mind next absolutely broke me. How am I supposed to tell

my then 6-year-old daughter that her daddy and sister are dead?

That night, the idea formed for The Catch You Later Foundation. As a teacher and coach, my husband never said goodbye. It was always "catch you later."

Building the foundation was a completely new experience. I needed to figure out my message, the legal aspects, and what exactly I am doing to honor my family. It started simply giving out scholarships to high school seniors, and I developed a team of educators to go through the scholarship applications. I began speaking at high schools where teens

take an active role in safe driving education. Speaking at schools turned into speaking at conferences, then speaking at police academies, to now speaking on senate floors.

Over the past 9 years we have given out \$45,000 in scholarships and created the first car crash simulation at the local high school, my alma mater.

But my greatest accomplishment was becoming the very first Civilian Certified Police Academy Instructor as well as the very first Civilian Certified State Trooper Instructor in the history of New Jersey. Now I'm working closely with law enforcement, educating officers on the importance of not letting a texting driver just keep driving or the erratic driver to continue swerving and speeding.

We also helped establish the nation's first Commission Task Force on Crash Fatalities. Now, all 13 government agencies in NJ meeting once a month and share information on infrastructure, alcohol consumption, drug sales prescribed or not, to see how we can decrease the number of crashes and fatalities.

None of this could have been done alone. The saying "it takes a village" is true, I was able to connect with the National Road Safety Foundation, which helped us get billboards up closest to the crash site every year as a reminder to drivers what can happen when people make poor choices

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behind the wheel. They also help with scholarships, a custom-made tent for street festivals, and help getting the word out via the media.

Advocating has become cathartic for me -- a therapy session every time I speak out so my family did not die in vain. No family should ever endure the loss of a loved one because of bad choices people make while driving.

The grief never ends. You learn to live with it, so one question I ask at every presentation is, "Are you going to be part of the problem or part of the solution?"

I've become so invested in this cause that I am willing to go wherever I am asked so people can listen. I think our presentation differs from others because we tell the back story, the story

of those left behind and all that comes with it from the moment of the crash, the funeral, the trial, the ambulance-chaser lawyers. We do not sugar-coat this. We cite statistics, but we focus on the story journalists never ask -- how is your family doing a year later, 5 years later and now 10 years later.

My voice is the change I wish to see!

# January 19-26: National Passenger Safety Week Encourages Passengers to **SPEAK UP!**

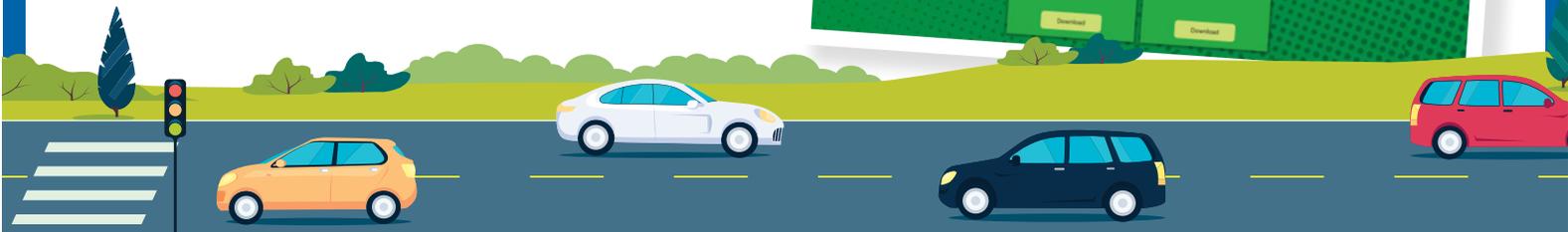
**SPEAK UP!** That's the message NRSF, We Save Lives and nearly 60 safety partners nationwide are getting out to encourage passengers to say something when in a vehicle being driven unsafely.

According to NHTSA's most recent data, 24% of passenger-vehicle occupant fatalities in 2023 were passengers. NHTSA reports 23,959 passenger-vehicle occupants killed in 2023; 18,101 of those were drivers and the remaining 5,858 were passengers.

This is the fifth year of the National Passenger Safety Week initiative, originally started by NRSF and We Save Lives. Other lead partners this year are Impact Teen Drivers and the Kiefer Foundation, joined by youth and safety advocacy groups, local and state agencies and law enforcement nationally. NHTSA has again listed National Passenger Safety Week on its official events calendar.

NRSF will mount an aggressive earned media campaign, with newspaper stories and TV interviews nationwide, as well as a massive social media push.

The NPSW website ([nationalpassengersafety.org](http://nationalpassengersafety.org)) has been updated and expanded, with a broad range of resources that can be used by partners for media and social media outreach and for activities in schools and communities. We welcome any other groups that want to join the effort.



# NRSF Supports Teens in the Driver Seat Programs

NRSF is expanding its relationship with Teens in the Driver Seat, a nationwide youth program from the Texas A&M Transportation Institute's Youth Transportation Safety Program.



In addition to supporting the annual Youth Summit, NRSF sponsors the Driving the Message Contest, which encourages teens to create safe driving messages in three categories – T-shirts, social media reels and PSA videos. Deadline for entries is Feb. 13. Information and entry form is at [www.t-driver.com/get-involved/dtm/](http://www.t-driver.com/get-involved/dtm/)

## DRIVING THE MESSAGE CONTEST

19th ANNUAL **DRIVING THE MESSAGE CONTEST**

CATEGORIES THIS YEAR

- Shirt Designs
- Social Media Reel
- PSA Video

Entries due: February 13, 2026!

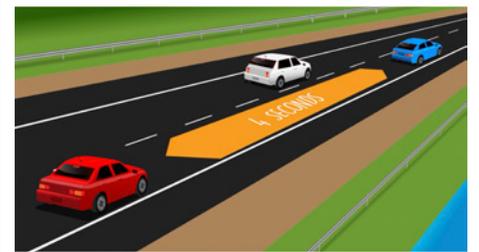
We were also pleased to host the group's leadership team in our hometown of New York City for their annual planning meeting in December.



# NRSF & ADTSEA supporting Driver Education with New Animated Videos



The National Road Safety Foundation (NRSF), in partnership with the American Driver & Traffic Safety Educators Association (ADTSEA), has developed two animated driving skills videos that focus on Zipper Merging and Following Distance



The short videos were developed with teen drivers in mind and are ideal for classroom use by driver education instructors, traffic safety professionals, and schools. The animated format helps break down complex driving concepts in a way that is relatable and reinforces best practices that new drivers need.



In addition to classroom use, these videos are valuable resources for concerned parents who are actively involved in training their new teen drivers. All NRSF educational materials, including these animated videos, are free and available for download at [www.nrsf.org](http://www.nrsf.org). Be on the lookout for more animated driving skill videos.



Stills from the Zipper Merge video

Stills from the Following Distance video

# NRSF Sponsors **Designs for Safety** at NY Auto Show



The National Road Safety Foundation is co-sponsoring the **Designs for Safety Competition**, hosted by the Greater New York Automobile Dealers Association at the New York Auto Show's World Traffic Safety Symposium.

The competition invites college students nationwide to submit ideas for autonomous vehicle designs that put a focus on safety, with more than \$10,000 in prizes and scholarships offered.

"Nearly 41,000 lives are lost on American roads every year," said NRSF's Michelle Anderson. "Autonomous vehicles offer hope for safer transportation, but only if designed with people and safety at the center. That's why we're asking students, especially those studying engineering and design, to help respond to this challenge."

A panel of industry/safety experts will judge the entries. Entries from finalists and winners will be featured at the World Traffic Safety Symposium at the Javits Center on April 2.

# NRSF Again Sponsors Detroit Auto Dealers' **Courageous Persuaders Contest**

NRSF is pleased to again be a major sponsor of the Courageous Persuaders Contest, organized by the Detroit Auto Dealers Association.

Courageous Persuaders invites teens nationwide to submit short videos calling attention to key driver safety issues – impairment, distraction, passenger empowerment and speeding.

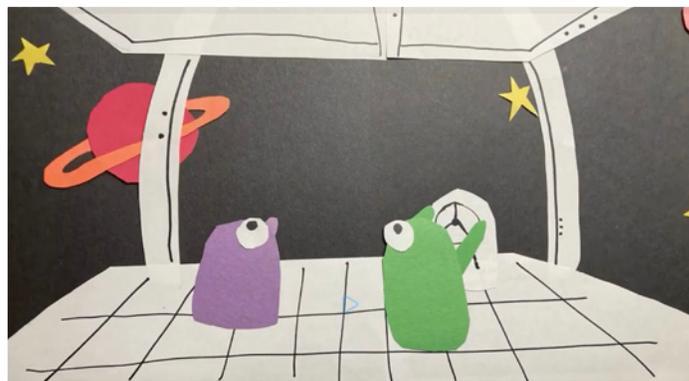
The program's primary objective is to raise awareness and change attitudes about dangerous driving habits in young

adults. A secondary objective is to expose middle school students to safe driving habits and motivate high school students to take a stand on this deadly issue, encouraging them and their peers to be safer drivers.

Information and entry forms are at <https://courageouspersuaders.com/> The deadline for entries is March 30.



Still from 2025 Impaired Driving Winning PSA



Still from 2025 Passenger Empowerment Winning PSA



## Look for **NRSF** at these upcoming events

### Feb 2026

Feb 6 Chicago Auto Show Chicago, IL  
Drive Safe Chicago Contest

### March 2026

Mar 19-21 Lifesavers Conference Baltimore, MD

### April 2026

Apr 2 World Traffic Safety Symposium Designs for Safety New York, NY  
New York Auto Show

### July 2026

Jul 6-10 FCCLA Washington, DC  
Family, Career Community Leaders of America

Jul 12-15 ADTSEA Cary, NC  
American Driver & Traffic Safety Education Association

### August 2026

Aug 27-29 NAWHSL Minneapolis, PA  
National Association of Women Highway Safety Leaders

Aug 29- Sep 2 GHSA Minneapolis, MN  
Governors Highway Safety Association

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Like us and follow us for the latest news, contest updates and PSAs.

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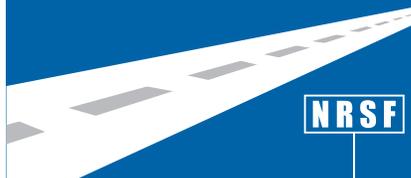
 [x.com/nrsforg](https://x.com/nrsforg)

 [youtube.com/nationalroadsafety](https://youtube.com/nationalroadsafety)

**The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc.** is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization that for more than 60 years has been dedicated to reducing crashes, deaths and injuries on our nation's roads and highways by promoting safe driving habits through greater public awareness.

NRSF produces educational programs for broadcast and for use in safety, educational and enforcement programs by police, teachers, traffic safety agencies, healthcare professionals, youth advocacy groups and other grass-roots related agencies, as well as federal, state and local government agencies. NRSF programs, which are free, address distracted driving, speed and aggression, impaired driving, drowsy driving, driver proficiency, pedestrian safety and passenger empowerment. The Foundation works with youth advocacy groups and sponsors national and regional contests to engage teens in promoting safe driving to their peers and in their communities. For information and to download free programs, visit [www.nrsf.org](http://www.nrsf.org).

### The National Road Safety Foundation



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