

Drive2Life Launches for 16th Year

TEENS INVITED TO SHARE IDEAS FOR PSA ABOUT SHARING THE ROAD

As our Drive2Life PSA Contest enters its 16th year, we are inviting teens nationwide to give us their ideas for a public service announcement that cautions drivers about sharing the road. The winner will get \$2,000 and an expenses-paid trip to New York to work with an Emmy-winning director to plan, film and edit the PSA, which will eventually air on Teen Kids News on more than 160 TV stations. Two runners-up will get \$500, and the

winners' teachers will each get \$100 gift cards.

The contest web page includes a lesson plan developed by our partners at ADTSEA, the American Driver Training & Safety Education Association, which represents the nation's driver education teachers. A blue-ribbon panel of ADTSEA teachers will help with judging the entries.

The contest is now open and the deadline for entries is March 25, 2025. More information, contest rules and entry form are at www.nrsf.org/contests/drive2life. The site also includes free curriculum materials that teachers and parents can use to talk with teens about safely sharing the road.



SPEAK UP For Safety



Passengers can make a difference in reducing the number of devastating traffic crashes by speaking up when in a vehicle being driven unsafely. That's the message from dozens of traffic safety organizations nationwide during the 4th annual National Passenger Safety Week, January 20-27, 2025.

The campaign was introduced in 2022 by the National Road Safety Foundation and We Save Lives, and NHTSA has listed National Passenger Safety Week on its annual calendar. More than 60 traffic safety and advocacy groups nationwide will encourage passengers to SPEAK UP with a campaign that will include a nationwide media blitz, social media outreach and involvement from groups including the Governors Highway Safety Association, which represents traffic safety offices in all 50 states.

"When people understand risks like impairment, distraction, speed, aggression and drowsiness, there's a better chance they will avoid taking those risks or letting others do so," said NRSF Director of Operations Michelle Anderson. "The National Passenger Safety Week campaign educates and empowers passengers about how they can save lives by calling out unsafe driving before crashes happen."

Visit nationalpassengersafety.org for more information, materials including scripts and videos giving examples of when and how to SPEAK UP, and to encourage people to sign the "Courage to Intervene" promise.



NRSF's Michelle Anderson talks about passenger empowerment with WCBS-TV anchor Mary Calvi



Inexperience, distracted driving, impaired driving, drowsy driving, and speeding remain the leading causes of car crashes among young drivers in New Jersey and across the country. To combat this public safety issue, the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey (BIANJ), is empowering teens and young adults to reduce these crashes through two dynamic, peer- to-peer safe driving programs: the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program for high school students and the College Roads and Safety Habits (CRASH) Program for college students.

The U Got Brains Champion Schools Program was launched in 2012 with initial grant funding from the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety. Building on the success of this high school initiative, BIANJ developed the College Roads and Safety Habits (CRASH) Program in 2022 to address similar safety needs among college students, who are overrepresented in crash data.

Today, BIANJ partners with both private and public entities, including the National Road Safety Foundation, to help meet the increasing interest from youth to participate in these safe driving initiatives. The commitment of our partners has enabled BIANJ to reach more schools, engage more students, and ultimately save more lives on New Jersey's roads.

Champion Schools Program: 15 Years of Impact



Now in its 15th year, the Champion Schools Program has made significant strides in promoting teen driving safety across New Jersey. This program allows high school students to design and execute campaigns to improve teen driver safety. Each participating school creates a campaign around a key teen driving issue of their choice, developing engaging materials such as catchy slogans, t-shirts, videos, and social media posts. They also partner with local businesses, government



Empowering Young Adults to Reduce Motor Vehicle Crashes in New Jersey

By Wendy Berk, CEO
Brain Injury Alliance of NJ

entities, and law enforcement to amplify their messages.

Recognized as a national best practice, this research-backed program inspires students to take ownership of their safety and make a difference in their schools and communities.

Schools receive stipends to implement

For the 2023-2024 program, positive survey results indicated significant improvements: speed was reduced by 67%, seatbelt usage increased by 27%, and focused driving increased by 44%.

their campaigns, and the top three schools each receive cash prizes, along with chosen runner up categories

This year, nearly 60 schools are participating so far. The program culminates in an exciting award showcase held in May where nearly 600 students gather to celebrate their achievements. This event announces the winners and provides a platform for students to share their impactful campaigns with peers from across the state.

To evaluate effectiveness of the Champion Schools Program, BIANJ partnered with The Research Institute at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) to create a student and advisor survey. BIANJ uses an amended version of this survey to assess the effectiveness of each year's program. For the 2023-2024 program, positive survey results indicated significant improvements: speed was reduced by 67%, seatbelt usage increased by 27%, and focused driving increased by 44%. In addition, three top safety issues were identified by students: distracted driving: 35%, speeding: 29%, and seatbelt use: 14%.

Overall, the Champion Schools Program proves to be an effective tool to engage students to help raise awareness in their schools and communities about teen driving safety and to help change both teen driver and teen passenger behaviors.

CRASH Project: College Students Taking the Lead



Now in its third year, the CRASH Project empowers college students to develop transportation safety campaigns on their campuses and surrounding communities. Car crashes are a leading cause of death and disability among college-aged students, with 8.5% of all crash fatalities in New Jersey occurring among individuals aged 18 to 24. Additionally, with one-third of all traffic fatalities in New Jersey involving pedestrians, college students are at a

particularly high risk, both as young drivers and pedestrians.

The CRASH Project empowers college students to create tailored transportation safety campaigns that address their unique challenges and concerns. By participating in the project, students receive a \$1,000 stipend and essential resources to tackle pressing issues directly, advocating for safer roadways and promoting life-saving habits. They develop campaigns focused on critical issues college students face, such as impaired driving, e-scooter/bike safety, distracted driving, pedestrian safety, and road sharing. This year, BIANJ is excited to partner with ten state colleges, including groups from Public Health, Criminal Justice, Student Government Associations, and Greek Life.

Car crashes are a leading cause of death and disability among college-aged students.

Participating colleges compete for cash prizes, with winners announced during a virtual award showcase in April. Additionally, college students are invited to attend the Champion Schools award showcase to discuss their campaigns with younger students. The final projects will also be showcased on the BIANJ website and promoted to community partners. This peer-to-peer educational program raises awareness and provides students with valuable leadership experience and volunteer hours while addressing a major public safety concern.

New Partnership for Increased Impact

This year, BIANJ is partnering with the National Road Safety Foundation to film public service announcements as part of the Champion Schools Program. BIANJ will specifically focus on high schools in overburdened communities, providing students with the unique opportunity to work with a professional production company to create transportation safety PSAs. Schools lacking access to media equipment or resources to produce high-quality campaigns will be given priority. These efforts aim to amplify the impact of the Champion Schools Program and ensure that all communities can create premium campaigns, while providing students with the skills and exposure necessary to advocate for safer driving practices in their communities.

To learn more about these life-saving programs and how to bring them to your community, visit JerseyDrives.com or contact Wendy Berk at wberk@bianj.org.

NRSF Supports Future Journalists through Youthcast

The National Road Safety Foundation is providing support to Youthcast, which trains young people in the art of journalism. By helping them as they learn their craft, we hope they will gain some perspective about traffic safety so they might cover driver safety issues once they join the media.



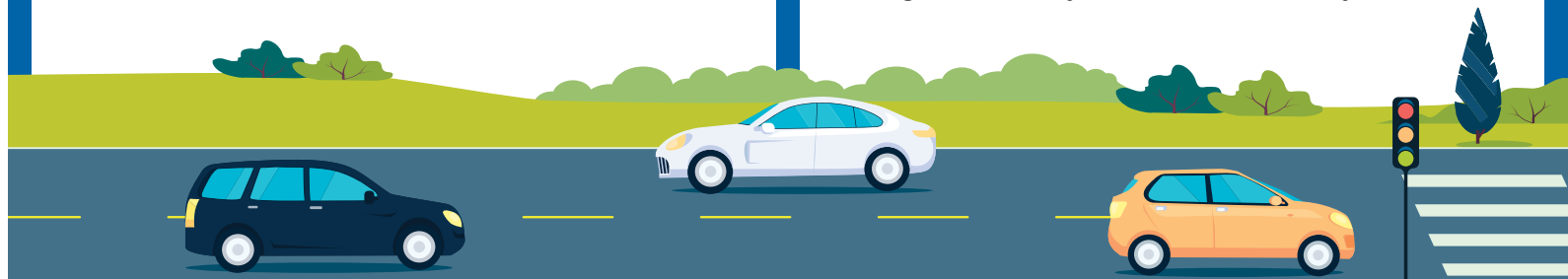
This fall, NRSF sponsored Youthcast's "boot camp," where several high school students with an interest in journalism underwent intensive hands-on training so they could write articles about traffic safety and try to get them placed with major media. The issue they chose was passenger empowerment – speaking up when in a vehicle being driven unsafely.

On the following page is one of the articles, written by Shaunavahn Reid, a senior at Weaver High School in Hartford, Conn., Alani Schwertfeger, a 10th grade student at Nazareth Academy in Chicago, Cindy Tint, in 10th grade at Bellaire High School in Bellaire, Texas, and Yaneli Victoriano, a junior at Palatine High School in Palatine, Ill. They worked with Youthcast Media Group journalist-mentor Nichole Christian, and student journalists Chelsea Spilleth and Alanna Nicholson contributed to the story.

NRSF Partners with DC Office of Highway Safety for Scooter Safety Programs at 3 Universities

NRSF partnered with the DC Highway Safety Office to bring scooter safety messaging to college campuses and other relevant communities in the District. College-age individuals account for nine percent of the District's population but nearly 28% of serious roadway injuries with more than half of those injuries involving a micromobility device.

With an emphasis on college campus activations, NRSF's funding enabled the District to conduct activities at three pilot locations, at Georgetown University, George Washington University and Howard University.



Teen 'Passenger Empowerment' Key to Safer Driving, Advocates Say

Road safety advocates are aiming to drive down the number of crashes caused by distracted driving by encouraging passengers – particularly teens – to speak up instead of sitting silent in unsafe conditions.

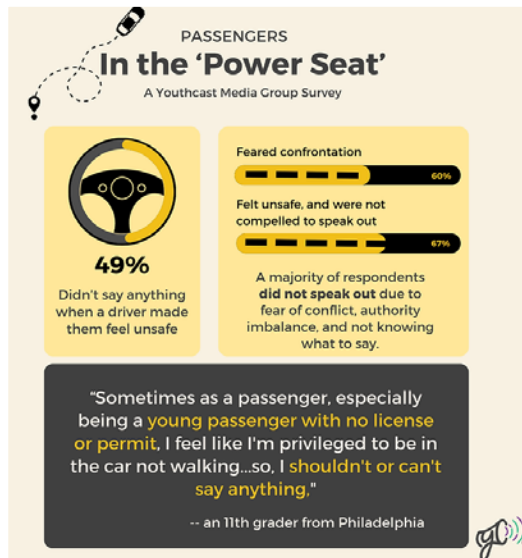
It's a new tactic in an ongoing campaign against a national problem. Car crashes remain the leading cause of accidental injury deaths for teens in the U.S., according to data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Progress is being made - the number of people dying in crashes involving at least one young driver dropped 5% in 2022 to 5,339, according to the National Safety Council - but the death rate remains much higher than for drivers 20 and over.

Safety advocates are looking to events like the annual National Passenger Safety Week, the last week in January, to help show teens why they may be their own best, against the dangers of unsafe or distracted driving. The advocates, led by the National Road Safety Foundation and We Save Lives, hope raising overall awareness among teens will increase the likelihood more teens will seize the opportunity from the passenger seat to help save lives.

The new focus on passenger empowerment grows out of longstanding evidence showing how simply having a passenger in the car with a teen driver increases the probability of a crash. The risk of death per mile driven doubles with two young passengers and increases when new passengers are added, according to the AAA Foundation.

In a poll conducted by Youthcast Media Group of 134 high school students from across the country, about 77% said that they had been a passenger while the driver texted or checked their phone or social media while driving. Seventy percent said they'd been in a car where other passengers were causing distractions.

If those passengers speak up and help the driver focus, rather than causing distraction, they'll keep everyone safer. "When it comes to saving lives, we want people to know it's ok to be a 'back-seat driver,'" said National Road Safety Foundation operations director Michelle Anderson.



Graphic: Angely Pena-Agramonte

Teens, who have already started joining the effort, agree. "Ultimately, the decision is not based upon you," said Sydney Montgomery, a student from Georgia who is a member of the peer safety program, Teens in the Driver Seat. "It's a decision that's around everyone, because if you do let that situation happen, you're not only impacting you, but everyone that's around you. So if you let that go through, you could risk anyone's life that's around you."

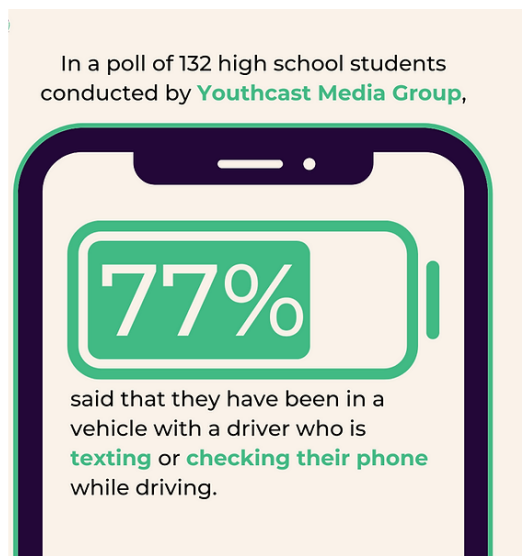
National Passenger Safety Week, now in its fourth year, runs from Jan. 20-27.

One of the more passionate and vocal advocates of the burgeoning movement is We Save Lives founder Candace Lightner, who also founded Mothers Against Drunk Driving, a nonprofit widely credited with changing laws against drunk driving and saving hundreds of thousands of lives as a result.

Lightner advises that every parent regularly ask themselves some basic questions: With whom is my child riding? Are they a licensed driver? Taking the time to pose tough questions, says the self-described "hellraiser," can help save lives. "Would you let your kid run around with somebody who carries around an assault rifle?" she asks.

But it's teens, ultimately, who may have the biggest influence on their peers, whether they are drivers or passengers. And many are taking the responsibility seriously: among teens polled in the YMG survey, 77% said they felt empowered to speak up when they felt unsafe, with more than half agreeing that "it's really important and I'd do it without hesitation."

It's something that Natalie Delmont, a student at New Foundations Charter School in Philadelphia says has "actually happened a lot to me when I've been in the car." She's been riding with friends who she described as "distracted, listening to music and all. There's a bunch of times where I stopped [a friend] from getting into a car accident because she wasn't paying attention at all."



Graphic: Hermes Falcon

At the same time, though, more than a quarter of teens said they wouldn't know what to say. And of the teens who said they did not feel empowered speaking up, many said

it was because they were afraid of appearing lame, like a “passenger driver” or disrespectful to the person driving, especially if they were not a licensed driver themselves.

“I don’t have my permit. I don’t have my license. Who am I to be talking about the way they’re driving,” said Natalie Spina, a junior at Philadelphia High School for Creative and Performing Arts. “It makes me feel like I don’t really have a voice on these issues.”

Sixty-four percent of students said they don’t believe enough emphasis is placed on the responsibility of passengers to speak up in unsafe situations.



Greater education about passenger empowerment could help ease some of the nervousness that some teens reported feeling about confronting distracted drivers, they said in the survey. That’s reflected in the attitudes of teens like Sydney Montgomery and her high school classmate Olivia Coiner who’ve become involved in awareness efforts such as Teens in the Driver Seat, an initiative of the Texas A&M Transportation Institute.

“If you feel uncomfortable and you see something wrong, you need to say something, because it’s way less of a big deal for you to call your mom and tell your mom, ‘Hey, can you come pick me up?’ than it would be to call your mom and say, ‘Hey, I got in a car accident. I need you to come pick me up from the hospital,’” Olivia said.

And the responsibility to speak up about safety isn’t just with peers— it can be with parents and other adult drivers, too, Olivia added.

“My dad, he works as a sales rep, so he’s constantly on the phone,” she says. “Sometimes I have to tell him, ‘you can do this later... you don’t need to do it while you’re driving.’”

Vanity Laracuate, a student at Weaver High School in Hartford, Connecticut, has done the same with a friend’s father, even though it made her uneasy. “I have to tell him to stop looking on his phone while driving because ‘you’re gonna end up crashing,’” she said she’s told him.

Vanity believes advocating for greater safety is a risk worth taking even if it’s not always an easy choice in the moment. “Though it may be intimidating,” she said, “it is always better to do so, than not doing so because, at the end of the day, your life’s on the line.”



Finalists Named in Drive Safe Chicago PSA Contest

Three teens have been selected by the National Road Safety Foundation as finalists in the annual Drive Safe Chicago PSA, conducted in partnership with the Chicago Auto Show.

Teens from Illinois and surrounding states submitted ideas for a 30-second public service announcement about sharing the road.



The three finalists are Emily Bergen, 17, a student at Gillespie High School in Gillespie, IL, and Antonio Knott, 15, and Noelani Elizalde, 17, both students at Merrillville High School in Merrillville, IN.

Each finalist will work with an Emmy Award-winning producer to transform their PSA submissions into finished TV PSAs, which will be posted on the Chicago Auto Show’s Facebook page, where the public can vote for their favorite. Winners will be announced at the Chicago Auto Show’s media preview day in February. The winner will receive \$2,000 and will be featured with his or her PSA on nationally-syndicated TV program Teen Kids News. The first runner-up will be awarded \$1,000 and the second runner-up will receive \$500. The finalists’ teachers will receive \$100 gift cards.

The PSAs of the winner and runners-up will be posted on the NRSF site at www.nrsf.org/contests/drive-safe-chicago



Watch us on Teen Kids News



Watch for news and PSA’s from NRSF every week on Teen Kids News, the nationally-syndicated news show for young people. Visit www.teenkidsnews.com to see when and where it airs in your area.

Look for NRSF at these upcoming events

The National Road Safety Foundation will be participating in several major events and conferences in 2025.

February 2025

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

March 2025

Mar. 9-11 Lifesavers Conference
Long Beach, CA

April 2025

Apr. 17 World Traffic Safety Symposium
New York, NY New York Auto Show

July 2025

Jul. 5-9 FCCLA
Orlando, FL Family, Career Community Leaders of America
Jul. 20-23 ADTSEA
Billings, MT American Driver & Traffic Safety Education Association

August 2025

Aug. 20-22 NAWHSL
Pittsburgh, PA National Association of Women Highway Safety Leaders
Aug. 23-27 GHSA
Pittsburgh, PA Governors Highway Safety Association

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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.



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