

Letter To The Editor: 100 Deadliest Days Begin For Teen Drivers

“100 Deadliest Days” is the time period from Memorial Day to Labor Day when the number of fatalities and injuries involving teenage drivers increase dramatically.

June 2, 2010 - [PRLog](#) -- This Memorial Day holiday paid tribute to the service and sacrifice of our men and women in uniform. It also commenced the time of the year that has come to be known as the “100 Deadliest Days,” the time period from Memorial Day to Labor Day when the number of fatalities and injuries involving teenage drivers increase dramatically. It is a time that parents worry about and police brace for, and it is upon us. With events such as graduation, prom and summer vacation just around the corner, it is vital for teens and their parents to be aware of the dangers.

The dangers facing our teenagers today are far worse than they were just a few years ago. Underage drinking, drug use and reckless driving have ruined too many futures and ended too many lives. If parents have already had this conversation with their teens, then now is a good time to reinforce the issues and their expectations.

According to the American Automobile Association (AAA), automobile crashes are the number one killer of teenagers in the U.S. — more than cancer, heart disease and AIDS combined. Every year, about 5,000 teens die in car crashes. That’s an average of 14 teenagers a day. More than 300,000 teenagers are injured every year in these crashes, and teens are involved in three times as many fatal crashes as other drivers.

Based on data collected by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration between 1996 and 2006 that tracked the number of deaths in crashes involving drivers ages 15-20:

Twenty-one of the top 25 deadliest days of the year fell between Memorial Day and Labor Day.

The top three deadliest days were June 14, July 3 and August 8.

The top three deadliest months were May, July and August — accounting for 29 percent of all deaths.

Experts say that the first year of unsupervised driving is the most dangerous, so making sure teens are safe on the road is challenging. Driver error, speeding, passengers and distractions are the main causes of teen crashes, and can significantly impair a teen’s ability to react quickly to changing traffic conditions.

Parents should not take anything for granted, make no assumptions and expect the unexpected when it comes to their teens’ driving behaviors. This is a crucial time for education, awareness and smart decision making. The Community Parent Center suggests signing a parent-teen driving contract, which is an agreement between teens and their parents, stating rules and consequences that are achievable and fair for the new driver.

The Parent Center urges parents, school districts and communities all over Long Island to reinforce smarter and safer driving practices for our youth during these “100 deadliest days.” One way to do this is to have teens sign our “Driving in the Safe Lane Pledge”. This pledge, developed by the Community Parent Center, is a document to be signed by new teen drivers, stating that they will abide by ten safe driving practices to promote responsible driving:

- Always wear seatbelts
- Limit number of passengers

- Restrict nighttime driving
- No alcohol or other drug use
- No cell phones or text messages
- Avoid distractions — CDs, iPods, food
- Keep eyes on road and hands on wheel
- Obey traffic signs, signals and markings
- Know the driving laws
- Drive a safe vehicle

Just one pledge can go a long way. Automobile crashes can affect anyone, but teen drivers suffer the heaviest burden from traffic injuries, whether from tragic early death or from long-term disability that may affect the rest of their lives.

The pledge is an extension of the Community Parent Center's "Driving in the Safe Lane" program, a comprehensive workshop presented by the Community Parent Center; funded by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration with a grant from the New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee. The program brings together police, a pediatrician and the parent of teen driver, who was tragically killed when driving with friends, to educate parents, new and prospective teen drivers about safety measures, New York State driving laws and parental responsibilities.

Remember: Driving is a privilege, not a right. When teens are handed the keys to a car, they are being given the responsibility for their safety, the safety of those who ride with them and those who share the road with them.

Wendy Tepfer, Director

Community Parent Center

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About the Association of the Community Parent Center, Inc.

Established in 1988, the Community Parent Center is Bellmore-Merrick's resource center for quality parent and community education programs addressing substance and alcohol abuse prevention, bullying/harassment and youth violence prevention, and safe teen driving. The mission of the Parent Center is to provide parents and families with education, resource information and the support they need to raise resilient children who are safe, confident, non-violent and drug-free. The Parent Center is a not-for-profit 501(c) (3) organization, underwritten by private donations, grants and legislative appropriations. Information about programs and educational materials can be obtained by visiting the Community Parent Center Website at www.communityparentcenter.org, or by calling (516) 771-9346.

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