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YOUTH TRAFFIC SAFETY MONTH A REMINDER THAT PARENTS PLAY CRUCIAL ROLE IN TEENS' BEHAVIOR BEHIND THE WHEEL

NEW YORK, May 5, 2020 -- Global Youth Traffic Month every May brings the grim reminder that traffic crashes continue to be the leading cause of death for teens. Last year, nearly 2,500 young people in the U.S. died as a result of crashes – a statistic that is paralleled in nations worldwide.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, mile for mile, teenagers are involved in three times as many fatal crashes as all other drivers, and the summer months are especially dangerous for teens on the road. An average of six teens die every day in traffic crashes throughout the U.S.

The National Road Safety Foundation, a non-profit group that for nearly 60 years has been promoting safe driving behavior, reminds parents that they play a major role in encouraging their teens to drive safely.

“Young people mimic their parents’ behavior, which is especially true when it comes to behavior behind the wheel,” said National Road Safety Foundation director of operations Michelle Anderson. “From when they are very young, our kids watch how we drive and when it’s their time to drive, they often do what they’ve seen their parents do. If they’ve grown up watching us speed, roll through stop signs and drive while using our phones, they are more likely to become dangerous drivers.”

Experts suggest several simple things parents can do to help ensure their teens become safe drivers.

First, learn about your state’s GDL laws. GDL restrictions vary from state to state, so familiarizing yourself with the restrictions placed on your teen's license can help you enforce those laws. Parents should follow GDL laws to establish important ground rules for your teen driver such as restricting night driving and passengers, prohibiting driving while using the phone or other electronic devices, and requiring seat belt use at all times.

Parents should talk to teens about the dangers of drug and alcohol use. Remind them that it is illegal to drink under the age of 21, and it is illegal—and deadly—to drink and drive.

Don’t rely solely on a driver's education class to teach your teen to drive. Driver's education should be used as part of a GDL system, which in most states requires teens to have 30 or more hours of behind the wheel practice with a parent or other adult in order to qualify for a driver’s license.

And finally, be a good role model. Your child looks to you as a driver, so practice safe driving yourself.

“Remember that your teen’s learning starts at home, watching the way you drive and learning from your driving behavior,” Anderson noted.

The National Road Safety Foundation has free videos and other resources to help parents talk to their teens about safe driving behavior. It can be viewed or downloaded from www.nrsf.org

The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc., a 501 (c)(3) non-profit organization founded nearly 60 years ago, produces traffic safety programs on distracted driving, speed and aggression, impaired driving, drowsy driving, driver proficiency, pedestrian safety and a host of other safety issues. It distributes the programs free of charge to schools, police and traffic safety advocates, community groups and individuals. It also sponsors contests to engage teens in promoting safe driving to their peers and in their communities.