



NEWS

NEW YORK STATE GOVERNOR'S TRAFFIC SAFETY COMMITTEE
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FORD DRIVING SKILLS FOR LIFE COMES TO LONG ISLAND
New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee Hosts Event for Teen Drivers

Students at the W.C. Mepham School in Bellmore, N.Y., are spending their day maneuvering through driving courses, testing their skills on driving simulators and watching up close what a crash might be like without wearing a seat belt. Hosted by the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee (GTSC) with a grant from Ford Driving Skills for Life (DSFL), the day's activities highlight the importance of safe driving and emphasize the consequences of dangerous choices behind the wheel.

"The Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) and the GTSC have long been advocates of education for young drivers," said DMV Commissioner and GTSC Chair Barbara Fiala. "We know the importance of instructing this age group, but it is also vital to show them and let them experience first-hand different driving situations. Today's program is allowing them to experience some challenging driving situations in a safe environment that they can then draw from as they transition into mature drivers."

Out of a dozen applicants, New York State's GTSC, of which DMV is a member agency, was one of four Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) members to earn a \$20,000 grant funded by Ford DSFL, the teen driving program developed collaboratively by the Ford Motor Company Fund and the GHSA. The event is reaching a target audience of approximately 100 17- and 18-year-old licensed drivers to provide them with an opportunity to participate in multiple traffic safety activities. The young adults will be provided with presentations and hands-on sessions that allow them to get behind the wheel under the instruction of trained professionals.

"We are extremely excited to partner with the New York State Governor's Traffic Safety Committee in saving teen lives," said Jim Graham, Manager of Community Relations for the Ford Fund and Community Services. "Vehicle crashes remain the number one killer of teens, and efforts like this help to provide needed experience to our newly licensed drivers."

The day will be broken into five 40-minute sessions, with 20 students participating in a session at a time. The hands-on, behind-the-wheel activities will be held throughout the parking lot of the school. Students will get to see a RollOver Unit, which demonstrates what can happen to unbelted occupants during a rollover crash and a seat belt convincer, which simulates the impact of a 5 mph crash. Participants will also have the opportunity to climb into a tractor trailer and gain a better understanding of where the commercial driver's blind spots are. Strapping on "fatal vision goggles", the students will experience what it's like to drive while under the influence of alcohol. In conjunction with this session, the *One Second Changes Everything* exhibit will allow them to explore stories of crash victims and the

tragic consequences of risky driving behavior. Finally, the Emergency Vehicles Operations Course is set up to allow students the experience of driving under emergency situations and test their defensive driving skills.

Two of the sessions will be held inside the school. *Driving in the Safe Lane* is a local program offered by the Community Parent Center, run by Wendy Tepfer, which educates teens on the driving laws and encourages parental involvement. *Choices and Consequences*, run by the Chief of Vehicular Crimes Bureau at the Nassau County District Attorney's Office, Maureen McCormick, is designed to educate teens about the dangers of drunk, drugged and reckless driving.

"Young drivers, ages 15- to 20-years old, are especially vulnerable to death and injury on our roadways – traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers in America," said NHTSA Region 2 Regional Administrator Tom Louizou. "Mile for mile, teenagers are involved in three times as many fatal crashes as all other drivers."

"Teenagers need to understand the risks, responsibilities, and inherent dangers that come with driving on New York's roadways," said Nassau County District Attorney Kathleen Rice. "Teaching them those realities in a comprehensive manner will make them better and more responsible drivers."

"The Bellmore Merrick Central High School District and the Community Parent Center are excited to partner with the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee to offer the Ford Driving Skills for Life program to the students of Mepham High School," said school principal Mike Harrington. "The safety and well being of our students remain a top priority of our school community and providing them with lessons about safe driving and the consequences of dangerous choices behind the wheel are invaluable."

"I'm so excited to be involved with programs such as *Ford's Driving Skills For Life* so that new drivers can understand the responsibilities and dangers that come with getting behind the wheel," said distracted driving crash victim Jacy Good. "I can only hope that when the students hear my story they will see the far reaching impact a seemingly simple cell phone conversation or text message can have on thousands of peoples' lives."

Since its creation in 2003, Ford DSFL has partnered with approximately 40 GHSA members on a wide variety of teen driving programs and activities. GHSA provides leadership and advocacy for the States and Territories to improve traffic safety, influence national policy, enhance program management and promote best practices.

For more information, please visit www.drivingskillsforlife.com, www.ghsa.org or www.Safeny.ny.gov.

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