

How Teens Can Keep the Road Safe for Other Teens

LIFESTYLE After joining a safe driving organization at school, one teenage girl discovered how many people her age are injured or killed by reckless driving.

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SAFETY FIRST: Through her experience teaching teens how to be as safe as possible while behind the wheel, SADD member Alyssa Royce has found peer-to-peer education to be the most effective.

There's no age limit for learning and instilling safe driving practices, something that Alyssa Royce, National Student Leadership Council member for Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), knows well.

When Alyssa first got to high school, she joined SADD to help her cope with personal difficulties and was shocked to learn how often teens are killed by reckless driving decisions. Now, she passionately advocates for safer driving among teens.

How is SADD making safety strides?

SADD offers initiatives to help teens hone their skills and become safer drivers. In recent years, they've launched SADD Strong programs, which are specific campaigns launched at pertinent times of the year. One is "Rock the Belt," which "raises awareness around seatbelt use through a series of fun activities, events and multi-channel media campaigns that are designed to include participation from peers, parents and the entire community." Another is called "Is it Worth the Risk?" and highlights the consequences of impaired driving.

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Alyssa and other student leaders advise the SADD National Board of Directors on its policies and programs, offering a much-needed teen perspective. Using SADD as a springboard, Alyssa lobbied for



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How can teens become safer drivers?

Alyssa stresses the importance of peer-to-peer education, not only for how it helped her on a personal level but also as an aid to teen drivers. "It empowers young people," she says. "It engages young people. And it goes to show that we're all in this together. If we're going to change teen behavior, then we need to engage teens."

One of the biggest problems to plague teen drivers is impaired driving. Alyssa notes that while drunk driving incidents have decreased, there's an epidemic of drugged driving on the rise. "There's this huge misconception that it's safer to drive under the influence of drugs than under the influence of alcohol, which is not true by any means." She's hopeful that, as with drunk driving, this misconception can also be changed.

Alyssa urges parents to talk openly and honestly with their teens and to also practice safe driving techniques in front of their children to lead by example: "Start these conversations when your kids are young so they grow up knowing not to drive distracted, drive impaired, drive drowsy and to always wear their seatbelt."

NICOLE ORTIZ, editorial@mediaplanet.com

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