

Age 15



"These Keys Come With Strings Attached"

# Amador Teen Driver Council

PO Box 1807, Jackson, CA 95642

[www.amadorteedriver.org](http://www.amadorteedriver.org)

## CHP: Start Smart!

CHP **Start Smart** classes for teen drivers and future teen drivers are held monthly at the local CHP office. Please contact officer John Hardey or Officer Craig Harmon for times and reservations.

**Start Smart: 223-4890**

*Our council recommends all teens attend this class with a parent!*

## Council Members

### Amador County Schools:

**Dick Glock** ~ School Superintendent

**Mason Gregorius** ~ Student

**Danae Littlefield** ~ Student

**Clara Dare** ~ Amador High Campus Supervisor

**Sandra Watson** ~ Retired Administration

### Law Enforcement:

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### Local Government:

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**Bob Hartmann** ~ Public Health

**Mary Walser** ~ School Board

**Pat Miller** ~ School Board

### Community

**Mark Russell** ~ Element 58

**Anne Lintz** ~ State Farm Insurance

**Marci Russell** ~ Jackson Parent

**Janel Archer** ~ Argonaut Parent

**Mary Ann Kelley** ~ Amador Parent

**Tina Wurzbarger** ~ Parent

**Virginia Manner** ~ Amador County Juvenile Justice

**Ingrid Barnes** ~ AAA Insurance

**Robin Valencia** ~ Amador County Child Abuse Prevention Council

## An introduction to Amador Teen Driver Council: By Anne Lintz

This is the first of many future publications you will receive aimed at helping parents and guardians with one of the biggest milestones in a teens life; a milestone parents dread and teens mark as a "rite of passage". Driving!

The Amador Teen Driver Council was founded in October of 2006. We created the following Vision statement:

*In 2006 Amador County experienced an extremely high rate of teen driver deaths. Because of these deaths, a group of local community members, educators, parents and students formed the Amador Teen Drivers Council. Our goal is to lower teen driving related deaths, injuries and accidents in our community.*

*Our committee will partner with local schools to actively encourage parental involvement in all phases of their teen's driving education. This will be accomplished by providing current resources and tools using a series of mailings targeted to parents, a website with supporting information ([www.amadorteedriver.org](http://www.amadorteedriver.org)) and publicizing the program at community events.*

*The success of this council depends on parents helping their teens drive safely and responsibly. Amador Teen Driver Council membership will include: students, parents, local law enforcement, Amador School District, County Health Officer and other concerned community members.*

*By providing resources and tools to parents and teens this council strives to make safe teen driving a priority in our community.*

*You'll receive your next newsletter when your son or daughter turns 15 1/2 then every 6 weeks until they are 16.*

You will start receiving a series of newsletters beginning with this one when your child turns 15 and ending with their graduation. From age 15 1/2 to 16 you will see newsletters every 6 weeks, thereafter they will come in June and August. Suggestions on helping your teen make wise decisions and helping you talk things over BEFORE your teen drives, along with many other helpful tips will be included, many written by local community members.

## Visit our Website!

The Amador Teen Driver Council's web site [www.amadorteedriver.org](http://www.amadorteedriver.org) is designed to be a resource for driving age teenagers and their parents in Amador County. Our experience as parents of teen drivers has been

although there are many resources available to parents, finding the right information at the right time can be frustrating and difficult. In this website, we try to make it easier for you to find

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## Tina Wurzburger "My Story".

I sit here at my computer at the six month anniversary of my son's death and I ask myself the question, as many often do, "if you could go back to the days before the accident and change anything that might have prevented the accident, what would it be?" A question that will probably haunt me for the rest of my life, and a question that I don't quite know how to answer, even if there is really an answer. I play it over and over in my head on a daily basis. Do I ever answer that question? Let's see.

We mothers know when our children are born, right away natural instincts kick in as to when our babies need feeding, comforting, when they are sick, or just plain fussy. Those same instincts play a role when you know your children are getting into mischief and you need to make a decision to jump in and be

the parent and teach them that lesson, or to let them learn those hard lessons on their own.

The one thing I tried to pay attention most to, when my son got into his teen years, was my gut instincts. He was the king of manipulation. Most teens seem to

*If you have gut instincts with your children, especially with their driving habits, pay attention to them! ... It just may save their lives.*

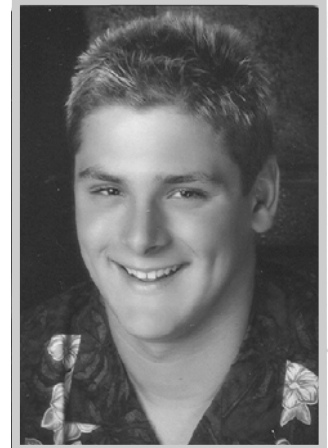
*Tina Wurzburger*

conquer that role. I was pretty good at reading my sons intentions and tried to

stay a step ahead at all times. Carl could never quite figure out how I knew what he was up to and when he did it. What he didn't know was I was a master of manipulation at that age and I knew and tried most of those same tactics.

When Carl was sixteen he had some money tucked away, and when he received his drivers permit we allowed him to purchase his first vehicle as long as he could pay for a year's worth of insurance as well. Carl was doing pretty well in school so he and his step father set out and found his bright red pickup! Carl was our third child to drive and for the most part he proved to be a pretty fast learner. Of course I could not drive with him while he was learning. I'm not that patient...

The day Carl passed his driver's test, I wondered, as I watched my son drive off for



~Carl Littlefield~

the first time by himself, if he was too young to have such a big responsibility to take care of. I just shook it off thinking, "it's his money and he paid for it, just let it go! It's time to let go and let your boy grow up a bit!"

I would often check up on my son's usual hang-outs, to make sure he was behaving himself. He hated that with a passion. The

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## Visit our Website! *Continued*

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the teen driving information you need and help you make your teen's driving experience as safe as possible.

The web site contains the full course of materials as they are being developed for the Amador Teen Driver mailing program, which targets parents of teenagers ages 15 to 18. In addition to the contents of the mailing program, the site has an expanding archive of supporting information for the program both in the form of resident resources and links

to other web resources.

We're always on the lookout for great resources to include on the website, **but we need your help to do this!** The contact page has a resource submission and feedback form that allows you to suggest web sites and other resources that might be included on the web site. You can also use this form to give us feedback on what you like and don't like about the web-site.

If you are looking for specific information on a particular topic, you might try using the handy search feature, which

Visit our Website @

***www.amadortedriver.org***

lets you search the content of the web site. A calendar of events will keep you up to date on any public events such as upcoming CHP Start Smart classes, driving seminars, or other teen driving related events.

As time goes on, we envision providing information about local road hazards and driving safety features. As a start, visit our handy visual road conditions page, where you can see an al-

ways up to date map with the current chain requirements for highway 88 and other nearby mountain roads! ~ Mark Russell

~ Thank you to

**Mark Russell, Element 58 for his creation and support of this valuable website!**

## Tina Wurzburger "My Story". Continued from page 2

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one and only time I caught him driving with a student in his vehicle under his provisional drivers license was about a month after he got his license. I grounded him from his truck for six weeks. He had to take the bus to school. Boy did that kick his butt! Not to mention it was a huge inconvenience to me. I had to prove a point that rules were rules. I think that it was the longest six weeks of his life and my life, because I never caught him doing it again. Carl had the day marked on the calendar when his provisional license was up and we had a small celebration at lunch! It was approximately five days before he was killed.

Spring rolled around and Carl started to get antsy for graduation. We worried a few times that he wasn't going to graduate, so I became this person who rode him constantly. There were always fights and arguments and he got to the point where he hated being around me, but I never gave up. I didn't mind being the bad guy because it was going to land my son a diploma! Did it make my son more worked up? I often wonder about that. He would always say he couldn't wait to get out once he graduated. All

teens say that at one point but I don't get that chance to know if he appreciated me pushing him, because he died one month after graduation.

Once he got his diploma and we could all take a deep breath and my gut instincts really kicked in, but I stepped back and didn't want to rain on my son's parade! What I remember, though are the sometime two and three days I didn't hear from him, and then I would call him and he would only have a second to talk to me. He would always be in a hurry to get off the phone because he was on his way somewhere.

Still, I was thinking to myself, "He gave you that diploma, let him have a couple of weeks off before you start harping on him to decide what he's going to do with the rest of his life!" I would call him and talk him into having lunch with me and he would! He'd scarf that down and say, "Gotta go mom, I love you! Got any money?" We had some really great conversations though.

What kept going through my head was that he wasn't eighteen yet. I could

still make him slow down and come home. Right? No! I thought, It's summer, let him enjoy it. Give the kid a break!

And then it happened! His friend Chris was killed in a car accident. Carl called me to tell me one of his friends was killed. He asked me if he could go to Pioneer for the night to be with some of his friends. I said it was okay. A couple of days later Carl came by my work to get some of his graduation money so he could pay some bills and he told me they were doing their own memorial in Pioneer for Chris the next day. I thought of my own classmate I lost right after graduation and how we had to all stay together to cope, so I understood why Carl and his friends needed to do that. I asked that he be safe and I looked into my sons sad eyes and I placed my hand on his chest and I said to him, "Please don't ever leave me like that Carl! I couldn't bear it!" And he looked back at me with his beautiful brown eyes and said, "Don't worry mom!" with a surprised look on his face "I'm a safe driver! I love you!" He gave me a hug and I watched him

walk out of my life. That would be the last time I would ever see my son alive. Carl was killed with his friend Jason on the way to the makeshift memorial the next evening.

So I ask myself again, is there anything I would change if I could go back? I really don't have an answer to that but what I do have an answer to is this. I don't go to bed every night with regrets that I didn't discipline my son enough when it came to his breaking the rules regarding his driving. I don't go to bed every night thinking that I wasn't a good parent, because I feel that I did the best I could in every way I could. But was it enough? I am proud of my son to this day, but I'll never get to see him be a man, go to college, get married, or have children. That is my regret!

If you have gut instincts with your children, especially with their driving habits, pay attention to them! Check up on your kids once in a while to make sure they're sticking to the rules. It just may save their lives.

*This Story was written  
January 2007, Carl Littlefield  
died in July 2006  
~Thank you Tina*

## Teen Statistics: by Mary Ann Kelly

My oldest child just turned 16. Two days after her birthday she passed her driver's test and had visions of driving everywhere/anywhere at any time. Reality was a bit of a shock to her when we informed her it

would be some time before she would be allowed to drive without one of us in the car with her.

My child like most teens clearly believes in the

"invincibility principle". That is, she cannot believe that something awful actually happens to people just like her. In all honesty, I have to focus to keep from falling victim to

*The Leading cause of  
death among age 16-24  
year olds is auto  
accidents...*

the same principle. After all, she's smart, mature and very responsible. Obviously,

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this is denial in it's most blatant form. Let's face it, if we were truly steeped in reality, few of us would ever give a set of car keys to our kids. Yet, I routinely speak with parents who are understandably impatient to shift the burden of family shuttle driver to their first in line teen. Just a few days ago a fifteen almost sixteen year old said to me "my mom can't wait for me to be able to drive my little brother everywhere". I reminded her that this is unlikely to happen anytime soon due to the prohibition on transporting young passengers for provisional license holders. She shrugged her shoulders as only teenagers can and said "yea it's illegal but who cares?"

*... Teens licensed at 16 have a 1 in 5 chance of being involved in a serious accident in their first years of driving.... 16 year olds are 3x's more likely to die in a motor vehicle accident than all other drivers...*

The desire to have the family driving duties shifted to our children is a common theme locally as many of us drive significant distances each day in order to get our children to their various activities. It does get old and who can blame parents for wanting a little slack in their crazy schedules?

I submit it's time for all parents to take this traditional "rite of passage" (driving) more seriously. The statistical data on teen drivers is alarming. It's imperative we remember it is kids like ours who make up these frightening numbers. Let's help our teens deal with reality and avoid the alluring game of denial.

If the young lady mentioned earlier drives her little brother anywhere during the provisional license period, her chances of being involved in an accident rises a full 50%. With each young passenger she adds beyond her little brother the risk of an accident rises

greater still. Even without the added danger of passengers, teens licensed at sixteen have a 1 in 5 chance of being involved in a serious accident, and 16 year olds are 3x's more likely to die in a motor vehicle accident than all other drivers. **Of the 236 teen drivers who have parking permits at Amador High, roughly 75 are 16. Statistically, this means that 15 of those 75 drivers are likely to be involved in a serious accident.** Furthermore, teens until age 19, are a whopping 4x's more likely to crash than their adult counterparts. For boys the actual death rate in accidents is fully twice that of their female counterparts. Furthermore, roughly 1/3 of teen driver accident fatalities involve an intoxicated teen driver. Clearly the message to avoid drinking and driving has yet to be heard by our youngsters.

Are you thinking of buying a car for your brand new licensed driver? We were, but now plan to wait. Why wait? The first year or 1500 miles driven by a teen are the most dangerous and this danger increases significantly when a teen gains possession of their own car during that inexperienced phase. While I lack data proof, my hunch is the challenging driving conditions in Amador County only increase this risk.

Finally let's face it, even our most responsible teens, even my own, will become more likely to speed as their confidence behind the wheel rises. Sadly, 1/3 of teen driving fatalities involve excessive speed. Among all causes of teen death what consistently tops the list? You guessed it; vehicle crashes are the number one cause of death across the nation.

*...The first year or 1500 miles driven by a teen are the most dangerous and this danger increases significantly when a teen gains possession of their own car*

Most of us look forward to the freedom we as parents gain when our teen can finally drive. **Let's remember each and every time we hand over the car keys to our kids, teen driving statistics are made up of kids just like our own, and sometimes they are our kids.** Let's have the wisdom and courage to help our teens live long and become responsible adults.

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