

Age 15.5



"These Keys Come With Strings Attached"

# Amador Teen Driver Council

PO Box 1807, Jackson, CA 95642

[www.amadorteendriver.org](http://www.amadorteendriver.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:

**Craig Harmon** ~ CHP  
**Martin Ryan** ~ Sheriff

### Local Government:

**Todd Riebe** ~ District Attorney  
**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

## Drivers.com Parent Guide to teaching kids to drive.

The Amador Teen Driver council strives to help parents & guardians and their teen drivers interact about driving. Fundamental to a teenager obtaining their license prior to age 18 is a parent/guardian accompanying the student on drives for a full 50

hours on the road as required by California DMV. We are enclosing a booklet reproduced with permission from [www.drivers.com](http://www.drivers.com). We'd like to thank **drivers.com** for their permission. We hope you find it both educational and useful.

## Talking to your Teen Robert Randolph PhD

In the course of developing this newsletter, the committee responsible for it decided to request input from a local psychologist with some experience in working with teenagers because after all, it is a crazy world out there. For what its worth, I was able to generate the following thoughts which I hope the reader may find somewhat helpful.

When talking to your teenage son or daughter about the responsibilities of driving a car, the following represents a few issues one might want to keep in mind from a psychologist's perspective. The first is that driving a car, which will most likely be covered under your insurance, is a privilege, not a right. If this is not made clear to teenagers, they are prone to assuming they have a right to drive because they are sixteen. Secondly, scientific studies of teenagers show that they evaluate situations very differently than adults for both physiological and psychological reasons.

Driving a car... is a privilege, not a right. If this is not made clear to teenagers, they are prone to assuming they have a right to drive because they are sixteen.

In their minds, bad things happen to other people, not them. Thirdly, teenagers tend to think they are invulnerable. Even if something bad were to happen, they tend to believe they would survive intact. Fourthly, every teenager is different, even twins. Consequently, one does not have to feel obligated to doing the same thing for all the children in the family related to driving or the same thing as the family up the block.

If driving is presented as a privilege, then you and your teenager can discuss both the positive aspects of driv-

*(Continued on page 2)*

## **Continued: Talking to your Teen** **Dr. Bob Randolph**

(Continued from page 1)

ing responsibly and the negative repercussions of driving irresponsibly. You may choose to do this formally with one of the contracts which have been provided on the [amadorteendriver.org](http://amadorteendriver.org) website, or with your own contract. Depending on your relationship with your teenager and your parenting style, you may also choose to do this informally. However, it is a very good idea to do it in some manner. Regardless of how you address the issue, it would be a very good idea to include positive incentives for a good driving record and honesty in reporting to you on “dicey situations” they will likely encounter. This shows that you are willing to treat them fairly by seeing

...scientific studies of teenagers show that they evaluate situations very differently than adults for both physiological and psychological reasons.

both their good actions, as well as their mistakes. It also will likely help you minimize possible problems in the future when it might become necessary to invoke restrictions. If your teenager has assumed driving is his or her right and that you are only looking to punish him or

her, then your restrictive actions will probably be viewed as “unfair” by them. They are then more likely to react more negatively to new restrictions by actively arguing or by being less forthcoming with you in the future.

Teenagers tend to think differently than adults. Studies have shown this to be partly physiological and partly psychological. For instance, physiologically they are prone to being more impulsive, and psychologically they tend to react more to peer pressure. Therefore, it is a good idea to talk with your teenager about various potential scenarios that might occur, and how they would go about handling them (or how you would like them to go about handling them.) Related to impulsive or potentially risky acts, they should try to make their first thoughts be “what could go wrong here” and “what will you (the parent) think about their actions if it does.” As Jeff Foxworthy has said, the most frequent last words of a redneck are “hey y’all, watch this.” If you are going to “pull the tale of a tiger” for fun, one might want to give some thought to potential consequences. Related to peer pressure, if friends are pressuring them to have a drink or to take several of them somewhere, how can they refuse while minimizing negative social repercussions. If similar potentially problematic situations are talked about in advance with solutions your teenager helps

to generate, your teenager has a better chance of acting responsibly when they happen in real life.

Another thing to keep in mind is that stories about catastrophic car crashes and negative experiences of other teenagers do not seem to be much of a deterrent to teens in terms of their own behavior. They tend to not consider themselves mortal. You can probably remember back to your own teen years and some of the things you did that you would not even consider doing today to confirm this. Therefore, you may get more mileage out of helping teenagers understand the potential negative impact of their actions on others, including yourself, and the probable financial repercussions on you and them if they are found at fault in an accident. They tend to have less denial about possibly “screwing up their own or others lives” than they do about death or being rendered an invalid.

Always remember that your teenager is an individual. Try to be realistic about your expectations of your own child. Adolescents develop very differently, and what is right for one teenager may not be what is right for another. One may be ready to drive at fifteen while another may not be completely ready at eighteen. One may pick up the complexities of driving quickly while another

may need extensive supervision. A famous philosopher once said “injustice is to treat the unequal equally.”

Most teenage drivers make mistakes, and many are involved in accidents of one kind or another. You can only hope to help them keep these to a minimum. If they can be helped to learn from their mistakes and be rewarded for acts showing good

*Check out sample  
Driving contracts to  
create with your teen  
driver @  
[amadorteendriver.org](http://amadorteendriver.org)*

judgment, teenagers will have a better chance of learning to drive responsibly. Ultimately, as parents of adolescents, all we can do is take actions that minimize the risk that they will act irresponsibly. We cannot supervise them all the time. We can only help them develop a level of wisdom commensurate with their level of freedom.

The above thoughts are not intended to be an all inclusive “cookbook” of how to approach the topic of driving with your teenager. They are simply a few issues about which you might think when that time comes for you. You might also want to rub that rabbit’s foot a few times, too...

*Dr. Randolph Practices  
Psychology in Jackson, Ca.*

## The Hardest Job

### Steve Cilenti Attorney at Law

Steve Cilenti was a police officer for the City of Redding for much of his 20 plus years in law enforcement. Steve retired as the Amador County District Attorney in 1999 and he now practices law in Jackson

It is 3:00 a.m. and the streets are now quiet but I've got a destination. I slow down the patrol car as I round the corner into a residential area and glance briefly at the street sign though I know exactly where I am. As I catch myself looking at the sign I wonder if my glance was merely my way of hopefully delaying my task at hand. I make a face at myself because I know that it's true; I don't want to be here.

*"Who is it honey?" ...*

*"The police. He wants to talk to us, both of us".*

I don't speed up the patrol car as I move toward my destination but drive slowly looking at the houses next to the street. Nice home, nice cars and I suspect, nice happy families. But I don't have a nice job to do. Everyone is probably sleeping but I know that I will be waking someone from that sleep and won't make them happy - sometimes I really dislike this job.

I wanted to be a police officer because I thought I would be helping or at least that is what I told myself. Maybe it really was because there is a certain excitement that goes with being a policeman. But it isn't all exciting; sometimes it is down right boring.

I can handle the boring but this part of the job I never

signed up for. No one told me everything that I would be doing as a police officer. Though I probably would have become an officer anyway, jobs like the one at hand would certainly make me stop and think - as I'm doing as I slowly pull to the curb in front of the right address.

Quietly close the patrol car door so as not to wake up the entire neighborhood, straighten my tie and tuck my hat under my arm. I really do hate this. It's dark even though there are street lights not far away. At least the weather is nice, but maybe that is part of the reason I'm here. If the weather was bad maybe I would still be doing the boring part of police work.

As I approach the darkened area of the front door of the house, I hesitate wondering if I should knock or if I should use the door bell. Dumb, dumb, just ring the bell. I really don't want to be here.

As the door bell sounds inside, I secretly hope that no one will be home. But I hear a distant noise inside and see a light from the back of the house. As someone nears the front door, I hear a faint shuffling on the other side of the front door. I sigh to myself, take a deep breath and unconsciously reach to check my necktie - it's straight.

"Who is it?" came a man's voice from the opposite side of the closed door.

"Police sir". Should I say something else, I don't know. As I wonder if I should say my name, the door unlocks and I see a man peer at me through a crack in the door.

"May I talk to you sir?" He is hesitant, but so would I be at

this time of the morning if someone rang my door bell.

"I'd like to come in and talk to you for a moment." The door closes slightly as the man releases the chain on the door. I'm glad the man didn't want to try to have me talk to him through the small crack in the door. I really don't want to be here.

As the door opens, I step up into the doorway; I don't want to stand at the door. I need to get inside. "Sir, I'd like to speak to you and your wife, if you don't mind".

"What is it? What's going on? I don't understand."

"Is your wife at home sir?"

"Yes she is, but what is this about."

"Sir, it would be best if I spoke to both of you, if you don't mind" I said as pleasantly as I possibly could. In my mind I almost felt like I was pleading - I really don't want to be here. I then heard a lady's voice down the hallway leading toward the back of the home.

"Who is it honey?" she said.

"The police. He wants to talk to us, both of us".

The lady walks sleepily toward the front door as both her husband and I watch her slowly moving toward us. She naturally, steps up to her husband and perhaps instinctively put her arm around his waist. They both turn and look at me.

"I need to speak to you about your son, can we please step into the living room". Fortunately, I can see that we are

at the living room, so I step toward room and motion toward the couch. Without asking I sit on the edge of a big chair near the couch, hoping that they too will sit down. Following my lead, both sit on the couch.

I've rehearsed this moment for the last 20 minutes and thought of a hundred different things to say. I haven't been trained for this. Why is it my job? Why me? Why is it that I have to be the one to cause the hurt that I'm about to cause? All of this I think about in the millisecond that I watch at the two parents staring at me. It's me because it is a part of my job and there is no good way, no easy way, but it must be said.

"Your son was killed in a car accident about an hour ago".

I wish that I could say that this only occurred once in my career as a law enforcement officer, but this was not to be the last. Unfortunately, I think that I remember them all. Not just the task that I had to perform but the devastation caused to the family by the news that I brought. Most difficult to understand in all of this was why I had to be there in the first place. Kids having fun, driving around usually with friends 'just having a good time'. A good time that ended in tragedy.

I no longer have to wake up parents to bring them the news of their child being killed in an unnecessary car accident but the memories will live with me a long time - but never as long as the memories of the parents who lost their children.

**Teaching driving using "Commentary Driving"  
Craig Harmon Amador CHP information officer**

Commentary driving when conducted properly, will reinforce and strengthen a teen's defensive driving tactics and attitudes. A conscious awareness of routine driving tasks and potential hazards encountered on the highways is expanded by this method of training.

Commentary driving is not solely an evaluation process but also a training technique. The role of the parent should be one of teaching in areas of identified needs. Every effort should be made to place the teen in a relaxed atmosphere so that his/her normal driving habits can be recognized.

The parent should possess the ability to communicate on an instructional basis, have a sincere interest in driver improvement and be knowledgeable in the techniques of collision avoidance.

Training begins with the parent driving first, demonstrating commentary driving. He/she verbally announces each move-

ment made while operating the vehicle and every hazard or potential hazard observed. Care should be taken to confine verbalization to significant actions and anticipations.

Constant chatter on meaningless points is distracting, tiring and detracts from the value of the exercise.

Following an adequate demonstration period, the teen begins driving. Routes selected should be varied. The parent should point out gross errors but otherwise make mental notes of general driving habits. Afterwards the parent then adds his/her comments. The length of time the teen drives is dependent upon his/her individual skills, but generally, the time should run from 30 minutes to an hour.

Besides being a great training tool, commentary driving is an excellent way of spending quality time with your teen.

**Steps To Getting a Driver's License:  
Morgan Ledermann Former Amador senior**



In a time of new, changing laws concerning the system of earning a driver's license and behind the wheel time, teens can get pretty overwhelmed by the system. Here's a quick list of what you MUST do if you're under 18 years old to get your license:

- A week in the classroom (or take the course through an online provider)
- Passing a written exam at the end of your classroom time.
- Retain a Learners permit for six months.
- 1 Behind the wheel class at a driving school (2 hours). Locally contact: Gold County Driving School or in Sonora contact:
- Drive with an adult (Someone over 25) while you have your learners permit for a minimum of 50 hours. 10 of those hours must be at Night!
- 2 More behind the wheel lessons at a driving school (4 hours) .
- Passing the DMV driving test

The first step is time in the classroom: Monday through Thursday from 8:30 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. for one-hundred dollars. (During school Breaks) and Saturdays and Sundays for 2 weeks during the school year.

Each day, students will learn vehicle orientation, highway driving as well as small town driving, blind spots, lane changes, defensive driv-

**This project supported by the following major sponsors:**

- ALP Printing
  - Amador County Peace Officers Association
  - Amador County School District
  - Amador-Sutter Hospital
  - Argonaut Breakfast Lions
  - Element 58 Web Design
  - Jackson Lions
  - Medical Staff of Sutter Amador Hospital
  - St. Patricks Parish
  - Rotary Club of Jackson
  - Jackson Rancheria Casino
  - Soroptimist International of Amador County
  - State Farm Insurance ~ Anne Lintz & Diane Witte
- Junior Sponsors:**
- Mel & Faye's Diner
  - Jeff Holman Auto Center
  - Mike & Cindy Rankin

**If you would like to sponsor or donate to Amador Teen Driver Council please contact Anne Lintz @ 209-223-1631**

ing, and more.. During the seven hours of engaged learning, kids build friendships with classmates..

**Read the rest of Morgan's article and see some helpful web links by visiting**

**www.amadorteendriver.org**