

June 2007



"These Keys Come With Strings Attached"

Amador Teen Driver Council

PO Box 1807, Jackson, CA 95642

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:

Mike Carey ~ School Superintendent
Elizabeth Chapin-Pinotti ~ Asst. Superintendent
Carl Mathis ~ Student
Teresa Vinciguerra ~ Student
Kelsey Walling ~ Student
Steven Robinson ~ Student
Michelle Medieros ~ Student
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Schools Out! Drive Safely *By Dr Mike Carey Amador County School Superintendent*

The summer of 2006 will always be a haunting memory because of the series of tragic deaths of teens on our roads. There is no recovery from such losses but there is always the hope that we can move to prevent such events in the future. The one, best way to do so is to remind ourselves and our youth about how precious life is and how it can be lost in an instant. We can also do everything possible to equip them with the driving skills and wisdom to go along with their enthusiasm and feelings of invincibility.

Thinking back on high school, and this is still true of today's teens, summer is a time where the brain seems to go on vacation or at least drop down a notch. In the mid-60s

summer meant the Beach Boys, Jan & Dean, etc., singing about the beach, the surf, the fast cars, the girls, the 'fun-fun-fun until her daddy took the t-bird away'. Growing up in east Oakland I didn't seem to have much in common with those songs, although a few summers were, in fact, spent near Hunting-

Summer means more free time for youth....For rural or semi-rural communities, this means more time on the road driving.

ton Beach living with a friend's family. But teens everywhere seemed to have that California dream.

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My Summer 2006 ~ *By Chelsie Haynie ~ Senior Amador High School*

Last Summer was a life changing experience for me. I will NEVER forget the summer of 2006. Four of Amador county's students were killed in three different car accidents, and I knew every one of them. I didn't talk to Kyle much, but I did know him. I knew Chris, but we weren't that close. On the other hand, I've known Carl Littlefield and Jason Backer since third grade, we were all in the same class. When I lived in Plymouth, Carl would come over every day; Jason wasn't over every day, but he was over quite a bit. Sometimes, Carl was over too much, but hey, that was Carl and we got used to it pretty quick. During the summer time, Carl would put his bed out on his porch so he could sneak over to our house when his family

fell asleep. I remember one morning at like six a.m. Carl came over to show us his new football gear, he loved football so much, and he was really proud. When I lived in River Pines, Jason would come over and spend time with me and some of my girlfriends, he was like one of the girls sometimes.

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I've known Carl Littlefield and Jason Backer since 3rd grade, we were all in the same class.

My Summer 2006 ~ Chelsie Haynie

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Those two guys were a couple of the coolest kids I've ever met, and I was close to both of them. I still can't believe I will never see Carl at my house again, and Jason will never tell me a funny joke or story again. I think about it every single day. Sometimes I wake up thinking about it, and a lot of the time I go to sleep the same way. It seems as if I'll just see them around and if not, one of them is bound to show up at my house sooner or later. But then I realize I will never see Carl Littlefield or Jason Backer again unless it's in a memory. It's weird, I would have never pictured one of my closest friends in a coffin but now that I've seen it, I can still picture it quite vividly. I can see every little detail from the clothes they were wearing to what the coffins

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looked like. The weird thing is, my memory isn't that great yet I'll always be able to picture Carl and Jason, I will never forget that picture for as long as I live.

I drive by the accident scene almost every day, and it's hard to think that at the beginning of that road they were being loud and just hav-

ing fun, but moments later the lives of two young boys were gone forever. It's not fair, none of those boys got to live a long enough life. It's sad that we all lost a friend, a brother, an uncle, a nephew, cousin, or even a son. Jason was like a father to his two little sisters, and I'm sure they miss him every single day. I could never even imagine being a parent to any of those boys or even Justin Meyers, who was in the car with Carl and may never be able to walk again.

July 8th 2006 was all bad news I awoke to pounding on my door telling me to get up, "the cops are here for you." I jumped up, my heart rate was sky high, my thoughts were filtering through my head and all I could think was, "God, what did I do wrong?" When I got upstairs, they had some questions; they had questions on a missing person. They wanted to know who hung out with Carl Littlefield, so we showed them the football picture. We told them that Johnny Ogilvie, Jazz Ogilvie, Justin Meyers, Travis Sharps, Brian Dodd and Jacob where the main people he hung out with. They kept on asking about Travis, "how big is he, how tall?" So by this time we wanted to know what was really going on. They kept on asking questions like, "when was the last time you saw Carl and who was he with?" We told them that we had just seen him, Justin and Travis the night before at Chris's funeral. They finally told us there had been a wreck late last night in Carl's truck. All we asked them was

if anyone died. They told us yes, but the wreck involved minors, and they couldn't tell us anymore information on OUR friends. They told us not to call Travis's house, so we had to sit for hours wondering which one of our best friends had died. We waited and waited, only to find out later it was Carl and Jason. The reason the cops came to my house was because they didn't know who Jason was, and he carried no I.D. That's why they thought it was Jacob or Travis. We all found out that Justin was at Sutter Roseville and he might not make it either. That was the worst moment of my life There is nothing like the feeling of a cop coming to your door at 5:30 in the morning to tell you that someone you love is dead. I will never forget how that felt. It sucks because you really don't realize how much you love and care about someone until they're gone.

Now, I'd give anything to be able to have Carl come over to my house, and wake me up one last time, or have Jason over talking at the top of his lungs just one last time. They were both good for that. I'd give anything to be able to see them smile one last time. I'm so glad I got to know them but I feel cheated just like everyone else, that they were gone so fast. I have so many good memories of time spent with them, but I know there were so many yet to come. Our time was cut short.

Carl was so excited that he was going to turn 18 but he didn't quite make it. He was only about two weeks away. He was also excited about graduating. Jason didn't get

to graduate but he was going to soon, Jason was supposed to be with me at the school on Monday enrolling in the senior program but I was stuck alone. I will be walking alone at graduation, because Jason was the only one I could see walking beside me.

Through this tragedy, I've met some really cool people. Even though I lost two of my best friends I got to meet the ones closest to

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them. I even found out that Carl's cousin is my half sister's cousin, so our families are kinda linked.

It's so weird how things work out,. Sometimes you like it and other times you will just plain hate it. Well you know what they say, what doesn't kill you will only make you stronger. After this summer, Amador County has a lot of strong people in it, and I know for a fact it has made me a stronger person. The summer of 2006 was the hardest part of my life and I'm sure there are other people who feel the same way.

Start Smart! A CHP program for teens ~ by Officer Craig Harmon



The California Highway Patrol (CHP) launched a successful 18 month "Start Smart" pilot program in the Sacramento and Stockton CHP Areas. The program was designed as an educational tool for parents

and teenagers in an effort to reduce the number of teenage injuries and deaths resulting from motor vehicle collisions.

National statistics indicate that California has the second highest fatality rate involving teenage drivers. In an effort to reduce this statistic, the Department has launched Start Smart II, a Statewide Teen Driver Safety Education Program. Approximately 80 CHP Field Areas will participate in the Start Smart Program. The Department's objective is to facilitate a minimum of 1,000 Start Smart Classes

and reach 10,000 students over an 18 month period (01/01/06 thru 06/30/07). The Amador Area CHP Office will continue to offer the Start Smart Classes as long as there is an interest from the community.

The primary objective of "Start Smart" is to provide teens and their parent/guardians with an interactive safe driving awareness class which will illustrate how poor choices behind the wheel of a car can affect the lives of numerous people. The classes will also encompass the following: The

CHP's Mission (Safety, Security and Service), responsibilities of newly licensed drivers, responsibilities of parents/guardians and collision avoidance techniques.

For questions regarding Start Smart Classes held at the Amador CHP Office contact Officers John Hardey or Craig Harmon .

(209)223-4890.

See also more valuable information on Teen Driving at the CHP website: www.chp.ca.gov/community

Statistics

- The number one cause of death in 16-21 year olds is: Auto Accidents.
- Car crashes injure 300,000 teens and kill 6000 per year in the United States
- The fatality rate for drivers age 16 to 19 is 4x's that of other drivers
- 1 in 5 passenger deaths among people of all ages occurs when a teen is driving.
- In 2005 23% of the young drivers (15-20 years old) killed in auto accidents had a .08 blood alcohol or higher.

~ Talk to your Teens about their driving... It could save their lives.

*Better to lose a minute of your life than your life
in a minute ~ Anonymous*

Slow Down: by Steven Robinson Independence High student

"Look out!" "Slow down!" These are words that every driver is familiar with. The same words I have to say over and over again to my own friends who are, more times than not, busy with the radio or their cell phone as they speed along. It's things like this that make me not want to drive with them. I remember the time I was riding with a friend and her cell phone rang. When she

...Speeding is something that really bothers me especially in this county where we all know the roads aren't always in the best condition and can be very deceiving...

reached for her purse and searched for the phone to answer, she drifted the car into oncoming traffic! I had to grab the wheel so we wouldn't wreck! But aside from these distractions, there are many other reasons why I prefer driving with a parent or taking a bus.

Speeding is something that really bothers me, especially in this county, where we all know the roads aren't always in the best condition and can be very deceiving. No one likes to go the speed limit because it's "too slow" they say. But in reality they will only get there maybe a few minutes sooner, which doesn't

seem worth it to me. I remember once when a friend gave me a ride home to Plymouth. He was driving pretty fast (faster than the speed limit at least) and we hit a turn too fast, and he almost lost control. We laughed at the time, but it was really dangerous. I am not the greatest driver myself, but I hope I recognize the mistakes that a lot of people make, and I make a conscious effort to not do those things. I hope my friends will start doing more. Have someone else change CDs or do it when you are stopped! Simple things like that will help.

Graduated Drivers Licenses Save Lives

Why a graduated drivers license? It works. The graduated license is one of the few new teen programs that show statistically they WORK! Comparing states with graduated license programs

similar to California's to those states that don't have them shows that ***there is an associated 16- 21 percent reduction in fatal crashes*** (NHTSA

fatality analysis reporting). Please go to our website www.amadorteedriver.org for much more information on the ***graduated drivers license***. Make sure your child obeys the laws.

Vance's Story by Vance Smith

My name is Vance Smith. I am 42 years old. I was involved in a motorcycle accident in 1981, five days after my 17th birthday. Not much of a present for a healthy young man. As a result of the accident a C 5, 6 and 7 fracture of the spinal cord and multiple broken bones has had me wheelchair bound for the rest of my life.

Even though helmet laws were not in effect yet on that hot July day that helmet saved my life and could save many more deaths or injuries. The last week in April 2007 in Amador County saw 3 motorcycle wrecks on one Sunday, all medi-flighted out with major injuries.

Safety is a factor, always precautions can be taken. As we know we can be safe and stay within the speed limits

and laws. Animals are a minor problem within the foothills. Always be aware of coming traffic to see if the drivers are paying attention to what they are doing, not crossing the line. EYES on the road! "Drive Defensively". There are a lot more vehicles on these old country roads than before. All we can do is be careful and teach our future drivers to be safe. It might be someone you care about or love who might be writing this next letter.

For more information on my life story please contact Anne @ 223-1631.

Concerned! *Vance Smith.*

Schools Out! Drive Safely By Dr Mike Carey School Superintendent

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Then the majority of cars teens drove were huge, slow-maneuvering boats on wheels or the other extreme, a tinny Volkswagen beetle which could hold five with no seatbelts. The Ford Mustang of 1965 was advertised as the "princess of the supermarket parking lot" (I recently found such an ad from that year).

Today's cars are lighter and faster than anything I can remember. Every Mustang produced over the past 10 years is pretty much a 'muscle' car. And these models have plenty of competition from every auto maker. However, the roads are not much different and the novice drivers today are no more experienced; this simply means that driving today is a much riskier business.

Summer means more free time for youth, more opportunities to do things that are not structured around school, homework, extracurricular activities; there's more daylight and better weather to be 'out and about'. In all likelihood, family rules are a little more relaxed in the summer. For rural or semi-rural communities, this means more time on the road driving.

All in all, as the teen in all of us remembers, it is a time for 'freedom', fun and a little relaxation. However, the rules of the road don't change and the attention and care in handling a huge, moving piece of metal, glass and fuel, can not be lessened.

Please take all of these thoughts and memories into consideration while you enjoy this summer.

This project supported by the following major sponsors:

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If you would like to sponsor or donate to Amador Teen Driver Council please contact Marci Russell @ 209-223-1631

AMADORTEENDRIVER.ORG

**Lots more valuable
Information is available!**