

LOCAL

# Program hopes to lower teen traffic deaths

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Each day, 10 teenage drivers die in automobile accidents in the United States. A third of all teen deaths are the result of car crashes. Sixty percent of teens in fatal crashes are not wearing seat belts, and 20 percent of teens who die in vehicle crashes are impaired by alcohol or drugs.

Safe Kids Cleveland County is trying to decrease those statistics by going into the four county high schools and teaching a three-hour class as part of the schools' driver education training.

Representatives of the health care industry, Cleveland County EMS, the D.A.'s office and law enforcement talk to students about how things such as alcohol, drugs, fatigue, and distractions affect their ability to safely drive a car.

The program was introduced at Burns, Crest and Shelby highs last year and was presented Friday afternoon to driver edu-

cation students at KMHS. The group plans to have a class for all students who take driver's education in the four schools.

The program is part of a national program called "Think First" which addresses numerous other issues facing teens.

Judy Hawkins of Cleveland Regional Medical Center coordinates the local effort and utilizes about a dozen people for each presentation, which includes lectures, skits, a slide presentation and visual study of a demolished vehicle in which a local teen was seriously injured and later died.

D.A. Rick Schaffer of Lincoln County talks to kids about the impact of impaired driving as far as long-term legal costs, and the effects on their records and their lives.

Health care providers talk about teens' developing brain and how drinking or taking illegal drugs - and in some cases even prescription drugs - slow their reaction time. Even hormones and emotions make teens a greater risk for accidents

because their brains are not fully developed.

"Things that are distracting to anyone - and even more so in teens - include cell phones, talking to other passengers, socializing with people outside of the vehicle, eating, and putting on make-up," Hawkins noted. "There are so many factors that hit teen drivers."

Emergency medical personnel take the teens through numerous injury scenarios and reenact a crash area. They stage an injury situation that can be painful, such as a spinal cord fracture, and act out such a scenario with some of the students who are fitted with traction devices to stabilize the spinal column.

According to Hawkins, the average response time for Emergency Services in Cleveland County is eight minutes, and that's after someone has recognized there is a crash and someone is in the vehicle, and calls 911.

"Hopefully, someone is able to do that right away," Hawkins



Betsy Tesseneer, right, discusses some of the distractions to teenage drivers during Safe Kids presentation to driver's education class at Kings Mountain High School.

said. "Then, you have to depend on people on the highway to move out of the way so medical care is started right away."

Law enforcement officers take the students through a crash scenario, actually declaring a student dead, arresting and frisking the driver, putting him in handcuffs and hauling him away.

They also go through the pro-

cedures of what a driver must do even if there are no injuries involved, such as reporting the accident.

"Driving is not a right, it's a privilege," Hawkins tells the teens. "It carries a lot of responsibilities and power."

Since the program is just over a year old, there are no statistics to draw on but Hawkins feels it

is working in Cleveland County. "It's sort of interesting that several of the people who are trainers in the program will see kids out in the community and they will mention being in the class," she said. "All of the various agencies involved are excited about it and we have made a commitment that this is something that is very valuable."

## STUDY

From 1A

"Number one, it means we're giving our citizens an opportunity for healthy recreation and to experience what Kings Mountain has to offer - it's history, it's natural resources, it's beauty. It's a beautiful place to walk and see the mountains."

In addition, Ozmore said, the feasibility study is being done in a way that it's not "an undue burden" to the taxpayers. The Tourism Development Authority gave the committee \$12,500 and the committee raised the rest.

"We're also looking at this from the economic development standpoint," Ozmore said. "We want businesses to say 'I want my business in Kings Mountain because they stand for recreation...they stand for a healthy community.' We believe when you have greenways that developers come and property taxes

increase, and it's good for people who own property around the greenway. It will be good for tourism. We think people will drive and stay in Kings Mountain hotels and visit our restaurants and stores and gas stations. And we think more business will pop up in Kings Mountain as a result."

That impact may not come for four or five more years, but Ozmore said the committee hopes to "turn some dirt" in the next 18 months.

"Whether it's building just a mile or two miles, we want to see that," he said. "As far as the vision to complete the project, we've got to pull folks from the county and city to the table. We are not going to be able to do a lot inside the corporate limits without the city's blessings, or outside the city limits without the county's blessings. We don't have all the answers right now, but the feasibility study will tell us how quickly we can raise the money based upon the route we

choose and whether we have to purchase land or receive easements from property owners. All of those factors will determine how quickly we can move some dirt."

Brutko sees the project bringing more businesses to downtown including bike rental shops, hiking and clothing shops, and small restaurants.

"It's going to be great for downtown Kings Mountain," she said.

Elliott agrees. "There are over a million visitors to Crowders Mountain State Park each year," he noted. "This would make it easy for those folks to access the city of Kings Mountain. The city's economic benefits would be tremendous."

## ROARK

From 1A

cancer. Now the employees go out in force at the annual relay in April to honor their co-workers and others they have loved and lost

Roark, a Kings Mountain native and daughter of the late Mr and Mrs. J. E. Childers, joined Foust Textiles 35 years ago and is the senior member of the staff. She went to work shortly after graduation from Kings Mountain High School to the Margrace Mill office and then became manager of the Kings Mountain Credit Bureau and Merchants Association.

She and her husband, Don, celebrated their 46th wedding

anniversary February 27. Joyce was 18 and her husband 23 when they tied the knot. Their daughters are Lisa Howell and Donna Roark. Mark and Lisa Howell have three sons, Zac, Alex and Nicholas Howell.

The Roarks reside on Bell Road in the Oak Grove Community and are active in David Baptist Church. Don is retired district circulation manager for th Charlotte Observer and Gaston Gazette and works part time at Callaway Security. Their close knit family also includes Joyce's three sisters and Don's three brothers and their families.

Joyce has no plans for retirement. "I keep busy," says Joyce, who is also treasurer of her church and is a past president of the International Association

of Administrative Professionals and on the NC Division board for a number of years. She is a past president of the Gaston Chapter of IAAP. Recently she joined 40 women from her church at the annual Ladies Enrichment Ministry retreat led by Cindi Wood of Kings Mountain at High Pastures in Burnsville.

Roark says daughter Lisa is shooting for a goal of \$11,000 for the David Baptist relay team this year and is confident that Tammy Hutchins Hogue and Tammy White, co-chair of the KM Relay for Life, have set big goals. Hogue's mother, Mary Ann Hutchins, died of cancer. Roark said funds from Relay for Life delivers hope for a cure.

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