



TEEN DRIVING: ARE WE ACCIDENT PRONE?

Police discuss common pitfalls of teens and cars

By Ryan Mehaffey

Factors contributing to accidents vary infinitely. However, concerning the accidents of teen drivers there appears to be several similarities.

Chicagoland area law enforcers were interviewed on the issues surrounding teen driving. The officers interviewed were Officer Norm Johnson of the Antioch Police Department and Sergeant Tim Podlin of the Hanover Park Police Department.

RIGHT VS. PRIVILEGE:

Johnson - "Teens think that it is a god given right and don't understand that it can be taken away for many reasons. Teens must understand that they are held to a higher standard, responsibility, and restrictions while driving."

Podlin - "Teens think that driving is a right and it isn't. Technically the real driving age is 18 years old. Receiving your license at 16 is an exception under certain circumstances. A 16 year old with their license has to have good grades, have passed a driver's education course, and have their parent's permission. This needs to be made more clear in order to understand the issue between a right vs. a privilege."

SPEEDING:

Johnson - "Most people underestimate speed. For every mile an hour that you are driving, you are going 1.47 feet per second. So for 50 mph a car is going 75 ft. in one second. If a car pulls out in front of you, it takes you at least two seconds to go through the decision making process. This means that by the time you react to the car pulling out, you are 150 ft. farther down the road."

SEAT BELTS:

Johnson - "The Seat belt rule is a great safety tool. Until you fully respect the ability to fly through a windshield you won't understand it. Whether you are a child, teenager, or adult, it is always important."

Podlin - "I think that the majority of teens obey the seat belt law and that the media makes a big deal out of cases with accidents that teens weren't wearing their seat belt."

ACCEPTANCE OF NUMBERS:

Johnson - "I don't think that the numbers have become ac-

cepted. Its just become something that doesn't have shock value because its been heard so often. The family members and friends who have lost a loved one never forget or accept it."

Podlin - "The reason that people turn on the news is because the media has this country addicted to bad news. We are accustomed to it. These situations are reported as news rather than applied to the person. The shock value isn't there when it doesn't directly apply to them."

SLEEP DEPRIVATION:

Johnson - "Sleep deprivation is taken as its face value. My experience with it is that we will think an accident in the middle of the night is a DUI situation when the person just ended up plainly falling asleep."

Podlin - "Most of the time alcohol or drugs is the cause of someone passing out at the wheel."

ALCOHOL:

Johnson - "Driving is a multitasking function skill that is developed over time. Alcohol takes away your ability to multi-task. What we notice is that the speed limit is one portion, but there is also outer and interior tasks, along with navigating the road. Young people are also both inexperienced drinkers and drivers."

Podlin - "In serious accidents, alcohol is one of the biggest problems. When I was supervising the shifts at night, most of the fatal accidents were due to alcohol. There was probably about a 90 percent chance that the accident was due to alcohol."

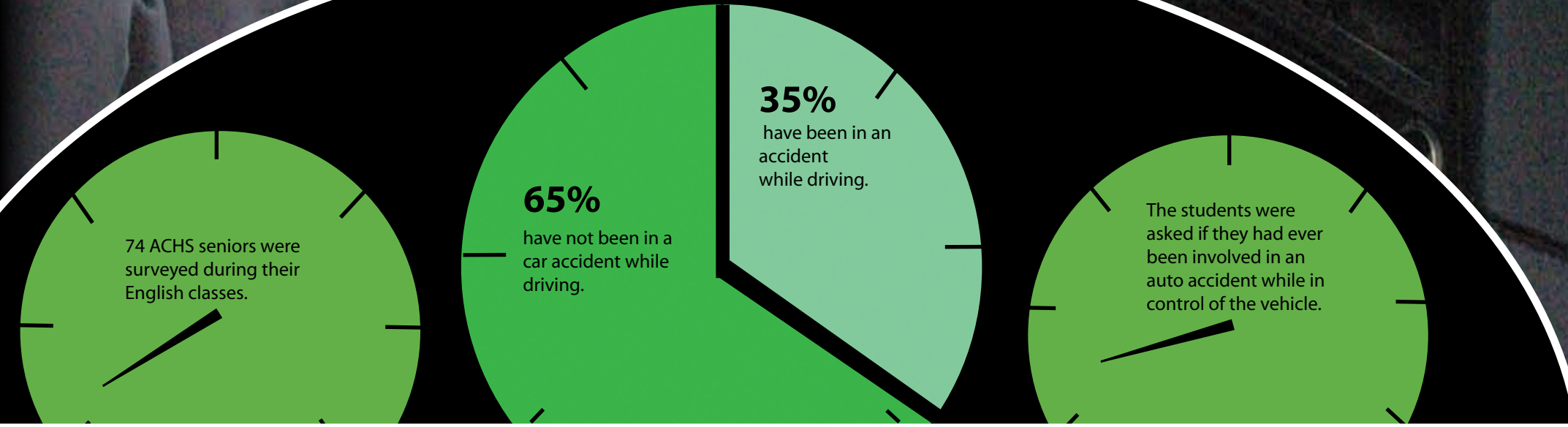
DRIVING PROGRAMS:

Johnson - "Any program that is giving an educational view on safe driving is and will be beneficial."

FINAL OPINION?

Podlin - "People seem to have more respect for what damage guns can do than what a two ton car can do. They seem to lose vision of what can really happen while driving a vehicle."

Johnson - "My number one concern is that teens need to be safe and uphold the responsibility to keep everyone else on the road and their passengers safe. I also hope that they can continue to realize that it is a privilege to drive in this state and not a right."



Speeding and reckless driving contributed to this accident which left a former ACHS student hospitalized for over a week.



Not all accidents are caused by irresponsible driving. Some mistakes are made because of inexperience with car care.



An electrical fire engulfed this Warren High School student's car before fire fighters arrived on the scene.



Photos submitted