



New safe driving program hits objectives

Teen driver car crashes continue as the leading cause of permanent injury and death in teens. A safe driving program launched last year aims to reduce the risk...

([PRWEB](#)) January 18, 2003 -- New safe driving program hits objectives

Perfect driving.

That's the first and only report on driver behavior received in the first year of operation of a new teen safe driving initiative available across North America. "It fits with our goal to prevent them, not catch them," says Gary Direnfeld, founder and director of the I Promise Program.

The I Promise Program was launched in January 2002 to reduce the risk of teen driver car crashes. The program took 2 years of development that included the input of traffic safety experts worldwide and focus group research involving youth, parents and community members.

The first year's objective was to introduce the initiative to stakeholders in traffic safety to see if support could be gained to bring information about the initiative to the public in as fiscally responsible a manner as possible.

Goal met. A Canadian company, The Dominion of Canada General Insurance Company came on board and offers a discount to teens in Ontario, Canada. Meanwhile in the US, Healthy Lancaster, a health organization in Lancaster, SC, offers the program at no cost for residents there. The website, www.ipromiseprogram.com, complete with special reports, letters of support and news articles on the initiative receives more than 200 hits daily.

In addition, over 90 health organizations, law enforcement agencies, insurance agents and brokers from across North America have requested order forms for distribution within their respective community at the local level. Research is now underway in Canada and a research proposal to the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta will soon be discussed with the Injury Prevention Research Center at the University of Alabama in Birmingham.

Registrations for the program have been received from 8 US states and 3 Canadian provinces.

To appreciate the risk of a teenager's involvement in a car crash consider this, says Direnfeld, "Load the chamber of a 6-shot revolver with 1 bullet. Stand across the room and point it at your teenaged son or daughter. Now imagine the chamber only holds 4 shots and one chamber remains loaded and you point it again. That gives you a 25 percent chance of firing the bullet in the direction of your child. If the bullet hits the wall, this is property damage but if you hit your child they will be injured, maimed or killed. Care to pull the trigger?"

This is in effect what parents do when handing their new teen drivers the keys to the family car. Twenty-five percent of teen drivers will have a car crash within their first year of driving. While driving is considered a rite of passage in today's society, property damage, injury, life-long disability and death are not usually figured into this rite by most parents. Sadly though, across North America over 6,000 teens continue to die each year and over 400,000 teens are injured each year in teen driver car crashes making this the greatest risk to the well-being of youth. In fact it takes the next four leading causes of death in teens (suicide, homicide, heart disease



and cancer) combined just to equal teen driver car crashes.

The I Promise Program requires parents and teens to sign a mutual safe driving contract and then affix a rear window decal that displays a toll-free number inviting calls on driver behavior. Any call received only results in a letter sent to the parents so they can address the information privately within their family.

Calls are not pouring in though. Direnfeld believes it is because responsible driving goes unnoticed. Similar programs in the trucking industry show a 22% reduction in crashes and parents who use safe driving contracts are shown to place more restrictions and greater expectations on their teen drivers.

Direnfeld and a long list of other organizations are encouraging parents to participate in the I Promise Program now. He admits that teens may whine about the program but adds, "Parents will be happier for a whining teen if it leads to a reduced risk of a car crash. Personally, I despair when I continue to read of these events involving wonderful teens so regularly in newspapers."

He adds, "Place restrictions and expectations on their driving and have them earn driving privileges. Although they won't say so now, they'll likely get their kids to participate when they become parents of teenagers too."

You can check out the I Promise program website at: www.ipromiseprogram.com.

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