

Police begin Alive at 25 safety course

Class teaches teens about dangers of 'unsafe' driving

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Published: Thursday, July 21, 2011 at 4:30 a.m.

Last Modified: Wednesday, July 20, 2011 at 7:44 p.m.

Raising awareness among teens about the importance of safe driving is something that hits close to home for Hendersonville Police Officer Jimmy Case.

“My concern was the young kids and accidents and injuries,” he said. “About four years ago, a girl broadsided me and my wife while we were on my motorcycle.”

Case and his wife suffered serious injuries in the accident. Case's wife lost a leg as a result of the accident.

Case is now spearheading a program at the police department to teach teens about typical driving hazards and show how unsafe driving can change their lives forever. “Alive at 25” is a four-hour driver's awareness program that differs from driver's education, according to Case. The course is not a behind-the-wheel course.

“Jimmy approached me back in the spring and he was looking to do something in the community,” Police Chief Herbert Blake said.

“I had completed the training that Case has now completed for Alive at 25 when I was the police chief in Loris, S.C. I was working on implementing the curriculum in Loris before I accepted the job here in Hendersonville.”

Blake said that if the course is implemented in all Henderson County schools, the police department would be the only police agency in Western North Carolina — and one of only a few in the state — working on this much-needed additional driving education.

“We need the cooperation of the schools to make this program work,” Blake said.

Accidents, including auto accidents, are the leading cause of death among teenagers, followed by homicide, suicide, cancer and heart disease, according to statistics compiled by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Accidents account for nearly one-half of all teenage deaths.

“Kids need to realize that speeding, which they believe will save them time, may only save them a few minutes, but can have a lifetime of repercussions,” Case said.

So far, Case has talked with Hendersonville Christian School, which is on board for adding the course to its curriculum in the fall, and Hendersonville High School.

Skip Goldsmith, headmaster at Hendersonville Christian School, said the school is always looking at ways to reach out to the community and broaden the curriculum.

Case said the course involves showing videos and going over the scenarios in the videos with students.

“We also have a booklet to give to the kids' parents that shows them the local laws,” he said.

“It is important to get the parents involved in this.”

Blake said the combination of videos, lectures and roundtables with the students makes the course a very interactive learning experience.

“The big thing about the course, aside from the education, is that it is free,” Blake added.

He and Case said they are now going to be talking to David Jones, superintendent of Henderson County Schools, about how they can implement it at all county schools.

“If we can't get the course in the schools, we will look at teaching it at (the City Operations Center) on the weekends for students who want to take the course,” Case said.

Anyone who would like more information about the course and how it can be implemented at their child's school can contact Case at 828-697-3025.