

September 1, 2009

Greer police offers course to reduce fatalities among young drivers

*By Anna Lee
Greer News*

The Greer Police Department is partnering with the National Safety Council for a mission to save lives. The program is called Alive at 25, and it's a national driving awareness program for 15-24 year olds.

Nearly 11,000 people in that age group die each year in motor vehicle crashes, said Brenda Veach, a Greer police officer who is teaching the course. That's nearly 30 people a day.

On Sept. 12, Greer police and the National Safety Council is sponsoring 30 people to attend the city's first Alive at 25 class held at 9 a.m. in the Greer Police Department training room.

Beginning in October, the class will be offered on the second Saturday of each month at the cost of \$35 per student.

Since Alive at 25 was introduced in South Carolina three years ago, 16,000 young people have taken the class, and 97 percent of them have committed to be better drivers.

The uniqueness of the program is that it's taught by law enforcement officers who emphasize choices and consequences.

"What's killing is cell phones, texting, speeding and no seat belt, (and) we concentrate heavily on those areas," said Steve Deibel, coordinator of the South Carolina Alive at 25 program.

Veach hopes to bring not only her personal experiences to the students, but what she's seen out on the road as a police officer.

The 4.5-hour class includes risk identification, interactive video participation, experience sharing with peers, role-playing in various driving situations and a review of local driving laws.

"It's an interactive course," Veach said. "We really push participation because one person out of 30 may have a story that can impact somebody else in that class."

The Greer Police Department is also working with area high schools to make the Alive at 25 program mandatory for driver's ed. Veach hopes more parents will get involved as well.

For more information on the Alive at 25 class in Greer contact Veach at 416-0114, the National Safety Council at 803-732-6778, or visit www.scaliveat25.org.

Applications are available at the city of Greer Web site, www.cityofgreer.org.

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