

Class to teach young adults driving safety

Each year, communities across the nation grieve the loss of high school students and young adults who get behind the wheel and made a deadly mistake that claims a life.

We lose far too many young people on our highways each year, and it's a problem that many don't pay attention to unless it hits directly at home, said Sgt. Steve Deibel, community services deputy with the Aiken County Sheriff's Office.

In Aiken County, there have been 29 fatalities on area roadways, Deibel said, 34 percent of those lives claimed were 15- to 24-year-olds. Sixty percent were alcohol-related and 80 percent of the motorists killed were unrestrained.

The Sheriff's Office, Aiken County Coroner's Office and Allstate agent Ron Grooms are sponsoring Alive at 25, a program to teach teens and young adults defensive driving skills in the hopes they can curb the numbers.

"Sheriff Hunt has committed this agency's support for this program and will continue to everything within his power to make sure the number of young lives saved goes up and deaths goes down," Deibel said.

Alive at 25 is a behavior modification program targeting the 15-24 age group.

Currently in the state, more than 9,600 students have completed the Alive at 25 program. Of that number, only one young person has since died in a traffic-related crash.

In 2007, 244 motorists died in the 15-24 age group on roadways across the state.

"Not one of those had taken Alive @ 25," the sergeant said.

Aiken County Coroner Tim Carlton said he has taken the opportunity to talk with students in the class before and emphasizes personal responsibility when talking with teens.

"I'm not trying to scare the kids, I'm trying to appeal to their sense of doing the right thing," Carlton said.

The class is free to the first 30 students who register.

You must be between 15 and 24 years old to register online at www.scaliveat25.org.

Click the "classes" tab for registration instructions.

The class will be held at Aiken Technical College from 9 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. in the Heath and Science Building, room 1329.

Contact Karen Daily at kdaily@aikenstandard.com.