

# Officers want teenagers Alive at 25

---

Officers want teenagers Alive at 25

By KAREN DAILY Staff writer

At 16, most teenagers feel invincible, that nothing can happen to them.

But when that same teen gets behind the wheel, just one bad choice can be a deadly mistake.

Thirty-six fatal wrecks have been reported in Aiken County this year, and 13 of those killed have been younger than age 25.

"We have got to try to be more proactive," said Sheriff Michael Hunt at a press conference Tuesday to announce the launch of a program to curb those numbers.

The sheriff's office is teaming up with the South Carolina National Safety Council to take part in Alive at 25, a program to teach teens and young adults defensive driving skills.

The program is a four and a half-hour class broken down into four sessions, said Aiken County Sheriff's Office Sgt. Steve Deibel, a certified instructor.

The classes are only being taught by off-duty law enforcement officers.

"The sessions build on each other," Deibel said. "We first talk about why they are at risk."

Teens face a number of distractions when they drive – cellular phone calls, text messages, music and other teens in the vehicle.

The program is being taught elsewhere in the nation and other parts of the Palmetto State, said Brooke Russell, executive director of the S.C. chapter of the National Safety Council.

The class has been mandated at one Columbia area high school where students applying for an on-campus parking permit must first take the class.

According to Aiken County statistics, the number of teens and young adults killed in motor vehicle crashes is higher this year than in recent years.

Aiken County Coroner Tim Carlton said that eight of the 23 motorists killed in 2005 were in the 15-25 age range

In 2006, the number of young adults killed dropped to three of 32.

The program is limited to 30 students per class and will be offered on Nov. 3, Nov. 17, Dec. 1 and Dec. 15 at the Aiken County detention center training room.

Registration forms for Alive at 25 are available now at the Aiken County Sheriff's Office and from the South Carolina National Safety Council at (800) 733-6185.

The registration fee for Alive at 25 is \$35.

The South Carolina National Safety Council, in cooperation with the Allstate Foundation, also offers scholarships to drivers who require financial assistance.

Sponsorship registration forms are available from SCNSC by calling (800) 733-6185.

For more information about Alive at 25, visit [www.scnsc.org](http://www.scnsc.org).

Contact Karen Daily at [kdaily@aikenstandard.com](mailto:kdaily@aikenstandard.com).