

School District Requires Survival Course

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OCONEE COUNTY, SC -- Learning to drive is rite of passage for many teenagers. But according to the National Safety Council, the No. 1 killer of those young people is car crashes.

And the Oconee County School District has had its share of students dying on the roads.

Walhalla High School Principal Evie Hughes said, "As a principal it's one of the worst things I've ever had to go through. And I don't want to have to bury another one of my students. It's been very tragic for Walhalla High School."

In the past five years, nine Oconee County students have died in car accidents. Investigators attribute speed or failure to yield as causes of the wrecks.

Starting this fall, if district students want to get a permit to park on campus, they must complete a survival course called Alive At 25.

The South Carolina Council on Safety endorsed the program as a way to reduce and even eliminate traffic deaths in the 15 to 24 age group.

"We have had too many children injured in accidents. Anything we can do to help them think as they drive and gain some more experience and knowledge about what to do as a driver," said Oconee County Superintendent Mike Lucas.

The NSC developed the course to deal with inexperience and casual attitudes participants have about driving, which can cause violations, collisions, injury or death.

The one-day course, which is 4 1/2 hours long, is taught by trained law enforcement officers in plain clothes.

Students may register by logging onto scaliveat25.org. The cost is \$35 per participant and scholarships are available.

Classes will be held from 8:00 am to 12:30 pm at the local high schools on the following dates:

April 17, 2010: Seneca and Walhalla High Schools May 8, 2010: West-Oak and Tamassee-

Salem High Schools June 19, 2010: Tamassee-Salem High School and Hamilton Career

Center July 17, 2010: Hamilton Career Center, West Oak High School, Walhalla High School and Tamassee-Salem High School

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