



Teen Driver Challenge and its Instructors Continue to Lead the Way

By Tanesha Williams, FSA Communications & Youth Services Coordinator

In an effort to combat high crash and fatality rates of teen drivers, the Florida sheriffs created the Florida Sheriffs Association Teen Driver Challenge (TDC) in 2007. The TDC program is presented to students ages 15 to 19, ideally with a 5-to-1 student-to-instructor ratio.

The course prepares teens for everyday encounters they will face on the road. Licensed law enforcement instructors teach defensive driving skills and techniques used by professionals to help reduce the chances of being involved in a motor vehicle accident. Today, there are 37 counties with an active TDC



Program, and over 2,100 students participate in the course each year.

With over 260 certified driving instructors, the Teen Driver Challenge program continues to serve as the largest defensive driving school in the state of Florida. Our instructors value their role and responsibility to provide our youth with the necessary skills and techniques that will decrease their chances of becoming victim to a teen crash or fatality.

Lt. Jayson Levy with the Alachua County Sheriff's Office states, "Our instructors take great pride and ownership in helping the youth in our community become more confident and safe drivers."

In addition to the value our sheriffs and deputies perceive in this program, student participants and parents continue to rave about their personal experience with the course and life thereafter. A mother from Brevard County wrote:

"I want to thank you for setting up this class and your officers that came in on their days off to teach these kids some important skills. I can teach my daughter the normal traffic laws and driving skills, I can talk to her about skidding on a slick surface and trying to control the car, but I can't do what your officers did yesterday. As an ex-firefighter/paramedic RN, I have seen several kids that died in car accidents.

When my daughter was about 11 years old I started taking her into the ICUs in Melbourne to show her teenagers that were in car accidents or drug overdoses, so she could see firsthand the effects of bad choices. After our ICU visits we talked about how that teenager ended up in ICU, why they will never hug their mother again and in some cases why they died. Your officers completed a learning process for my daughter and showed her how to correct a bad situation should one happen. There's no telling how many lives your officers have saved and will save. One of those lives could be my daughter's. As a mother, I thank you and your officers for keeping my most precious gift safe."

Testimonies such as this are what motivates our instructors to dedicate time and effort to our program. One teen taught to make better choices on the road can save the lives of many.

On Nov. 7-8, 2017, the program held its 3rd Annual Teen Driver Challenge Symposium during the Florida Sheriffs Association Executive Leadership and Fleet Exposition Conference in Ponte Vedra Beach, Fla. This event brought together more than 40 instructors from across the





state for training and updates to the program.

In addition to training, the instructors received motivational remarks from guest Cara Filler, a compelling author, entrepreneur and one of North America's leading youth motivational and prevention speakers.

On day two of the symposium, the St. John's County Sheriff's Office hosted the Equipment and Technology Showcase, which offered agencies information and insight on various tools and resources that could be utilized in their local program, including a TDC trailer simulator, No-Zone Ranger, EasyDrift driver training system, roll-over trailer, seatbelt convincer, drunk goggle demonstrations and much more.

The FSA also raffled off a driving simulator, donated by a race car driver, to aide one lucky county with providing a unique virtual driving experience. The Lee County Sheriff's Office was the winning agency of the simulator and has since put it to good use.

"Our program has been truly blessed to receive this high-tech simulator which safely delivers an experience unlike any other," said Lt. Larry

King of the Lee County Sheriff's Office. "My first impression was, 'Wow! What an awesome video game!' Once behind the controls, our teen drivers quickly get a reality check as their vehicle speeds down a race track, encounter turns, uneven or rough surfaces and other obstacles. They encounter real-life results of a vibrating and shaking steering wheel while the seat bounces and moves side-to-side to simulate the car's motion."

Educating our youth to make the best choices that ultimately affect them, their family and community, is vital to our program instructors. One goal of our program is to eventually have all 67 counties participating in the Teen Driver Challenge. With the continued support from our sheriffs, State Farm, the Florida Department of Transportation, and generous FSA members like you, this program will continue to grow and make a difference in the lives of our teen drivers.

The Florida Sheriffs Association, our sheriffs and deputy instructors are proud champions in providing safer roads for everyone. 🚗



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