

# AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

# PROGRESS REPORT

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## WILLIS TESTIFIES BEFORE CONGRESS

The Subcommittee on Surface Transportation of the House of Representatives convened a hearing on Thursday, July 17, to look at the problem of aggressive driving. Foundation President David Willis testified at the hearing, along with Dr. Ricardo Martinez, Administrator of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Dr. Allan F. Williams of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, law enforcement officers, citizen activists, and psychologists.

In his testimony, Mr. Willis recapitulated the findings of the Foundation's aggressive driving study, explaining "...the 10,037 incidents of violent aggressive driving identified in the Mizell study are but a microcosm of the full extent of the aggressive driving problem in America today." He called for strong law enforcement and national adoption of the #77 cellular phone number to report aggressive drivers and other highway problems. Mr. Willis also pointed out that one of the situations that can lead to violence is slow traffic in the left lane. "Those 24 states that don't have 'drive right, pass left' laws also need a wake-up call," he said. "The absence of such statutes is an open invitation not only to rude behavior but also to tragedy on the road."

Mr. Willis concluded, "Aggressive driving doesn't have to end in mayhem for it to be a legitimate public policy concern," and pointed to the AAA Potomac survey showing that aggressive driving is the number-one safety concern for drivers in the Washington, D.C. area. "It's time to get serious about dealing with this growing traffic safety problem," Willis said.

Other witnesses called for improved red-light-running enforcement, increased safety-belt use, more funding for traffic safety, funding for projects to reduce traffic congestion, and reducing speeds, particularly in residential areas.



## "CHILDREN IN TRAFFIC": STILL A CLASSIC

Though it's now old enough to drive, "Children in Traffic: Why Are They Different?" remains popular with educators, parents, and safety professionals. In June the video received a glowing review from Bill Paul of School Transportation News, who said, "...this video will blow your socks off. If you are in the child transportation business, this video is as if Moses came down off the mount a second time with additional information from on high."

Produced in Germany in 1983, "Children in Traffic" uses candid footage of children in real-life traffic situations. The resulting examples demonstrate the ways children differ from adults in their attitudes, perceptions, and abilities. For example, children mix fantasy and reality, viewing cars as large living creatures; as a result they may think cars can stop as quickly as pedestrians. They also can't judge speed and distance, don't have good directional hearing, are easily distracted, and are likely to focus on only one thing at a time. Thus, a child will chase a ball out into the street in spite of "knowing" that it's dangerous and forbidden.

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*David Willis, President of the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, testifies about aggressive driving in Congress.*

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*"Children in Traffic" explains why children often take dangerous chances.*

## CHILDREN IN TRAFFIC—from page 1

This 13-minute video has remained a steady seller for the Foundation since its release. Today, even though it's starting to look dated, the information it offers is still fresh and vital for child safety advocates.

In his review Paul said, "The video cautions drivers that they should not rely solely on traffic regulations to protect children," and ended, "This video should be in the library of every school bus operation in the country."

## WEB PAGE GETS NEW LOOK, MORE FEATURES

The Foundation's home page on the World Wide Web just got an overhaul — it sports a clean, classic new look and some uniquely useful

features. Now you can order your Foundation safety materials on-line, using the page's secure credit-card software. In addition to the full text of many Foundation reports, the page contains newsletters, photos of Foundation staff, and an opportunity to join in discussion of traffic safety issues. "We want it to become the primary on-line resource for everyone who's interested in traffic safety," says Christopher Johnson, who has spent months coordinating the many details of the page's redesign. Johnson

adds, "It's a unique way for the Foundation to educate, inform, and get feedback from people on-line."

## SHOOTING FINISHED FOR "FRIDAY"

"Just Another Friday Night" is one of the Foundation's most popular videos. The teen-centered plot with its equivocal ending triggers lively discussions among teens on the dangers of alcohol use and driving. But over the years the film has become old-fashioned, and the once-hot score by Huey Lewis and the News seems more Golden Oldies than anything else.

Shot in California, the new version of the video features an updated look, fresh faces, and with-it music. It also reflects the changes in alcohol beverage laws that have taken place since the



*Matthew Barrows of Pacific Light Productions directs Ruthie Sauls in the remake of "Just Another Friday Night."*

earlier version was filmed in 1984. The one thing that hasn't changed is the video's message: Drinking and driving can have terrible consequences, and teens need to think about the results of

their actions before they decide to combine cars and alcohol. "The goal is to update the video without changing what made it so powerful in the first place," explains Robert Stratton, the Foundation's marketing manager.

The new video is priced at \$40 and will be available in early December.



Check out the new look at <http://www.aafts.org>

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## CLUB NEWS

### WISCONSIN LOVES "CHILDREN"

The Wisconsin Department of Transportation likes "Children In Traffic" so much that the video is now required viewing for law officers. "We're saying they need to show officers some kind of training video," says Joanne Pruitt Thunder, Pedestrian and Bicycle Safety Program Manager for the Bureau of Transportation Safety in the Wisconsin Department of Transportation. "Children in Traffic is designated as the training video for anybody doing pedestrian safety law enforcement." Pruitt Thunder is purchasing 25 of the tapes and will distribute them to agencies that lend out videos. "For example, we're going to provide some for WINS, Wisconsin Information Network for Safety," Pruitt Thunder says, "to be added to their loan program."

Pruitt Thunder praises the video's insights into child behavior. "Many times when we show this video people who have been doing safety for years say they didn't know some of the things about developmental ability," Pruitt Thunder says.

Thanks to the Wisconsin AAA club, the DOT will get their tapes at a bargain rate. "We're effectively subsidizing the purchase," explains Francette Hamilton, Administrative Assistant of the Public and Government Relations department of AAA Wisconsin. On older videotapes, the Foundation offers a quantity discount of \$5 per tape for orders of 25 or more. AAA Wisconsin further discounted the tapes to the Department of Transportation for \$19.95. "We think it's the best video on the subject," Hamilton says.

### AWAKE TELLS APNEA PATIENTS "WAKE UP!"

Street fair revelers in Manhattan have a chance to learn about sleep, thanks to A.W.A.K.E. ("Alert, Well, And Keeping Energetic.") Twice a year the organization sets up a booth to inform the public about sleep apnea, and always has a stack of "Wake Up!" brochures handy. "We've been distributing a lot of them," says Arthur J. Weiss, chairman of A.W.A.K.E. New York. "We have a sign that says 'apnea information here' and people talk to us. We have a paper screening —

a self-administered test. If you score high enough you should see your doctor."

Weiss has great praise for the "Wake Up!" brochure. "They're very attractive and people seem to like it. I've always thought the cartoon format was brilliantly designed and executed," he says.

Once a person has been diagnosed with apnea, A.W.A.K.E.'s monthly meetings offer support and encouragement. "We're here not only for treatment but encouraging compliance," Weiss says, "because the CPAP machine is a difficult thing to get used to. A lot of people have them but don't use them." ("CPAP" stands for continuous positive airway pressure machine, which keeps the breathing passages open at night and enables apnea patients to sleep soundly.) A.W.A.K.E. provides professional education for doctors who may not be knowledgeable about sleep disorders, and informs professional drivers about the dangers of sleep apnea. "But mostly we're here to support sleep apnea patients, especially when they're new to it," Weiss says. "People will come back to the street fair the next year and say they've gotten their CPAP, and they feel wonderful, thank you thank you thank you."



### SUBMIT YOUR PROPOSALS NOW

The AAA Foundation's funding year begins on October 31, the deadline for research proposals to be funded in the forthcoming year. The Foundation encourages researchers to submit proposals that add to overall knowledge of traffic safety in a specific area and whose results will lend themselves to the development of public information products and campaigns.

Proposals should be brief — no longer than 10 pages — and should clearly describe the research plan, explain the purpose of the research, and provide detail of funding needs. Full details can be found on the Foundation's web site at <http://www.aafts.org>. Send proposals in triplicate to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, Suite 201, 1440 New York Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

## ***DRIVER-ZED WILL DEBUT IN NOVEMBER***

The Foundation's teen driver teaching software, driver-ZED, has taken another step towards completion. The "alpha" version (the software equivalent of a galley proof) began testing in late August. Any problems found in the alpha version will be ironed out in the "beta" version, which will also be tested but by a much larger group, including real teenagers.

The final version of driver-ZED will be released in mid-November, including press conferences and demonstrations around the country.

The driver-ZED program uses full-motion computerized video to show a variety of realistic traffic scenes and runs on an Intel Pentium MMX 166mhz or better processor with software MPEG1 playback. Teens learn to recognize danger and make safe choices by seeing situations on the computer — before they have to make those decisions on the road.

## ***HOW DO YOU SHOW YOU'RE SORRY?***

It's been suggested that what motorists need is a universal sign for "I'm sorry!" so they can apologize to other drivers. AAA Foundation's Webmaster Christopher Johnson has added a contest to the Foundation's web page that asks for suggestions.

"What we need is a universally understood gesture that means 'I'm sorry,'" Johnson says. "If drivers could apologize to each other when they make a mistake, we might see a decrease in aggressive driving." The best answers will receive a special retro-reflective safety vest, ideal for cyclists and pedestrians. Results will be published on the Foundation's Web site on October 1.

To enter the contest, go to the Foundation's web site at <http://www.aafts.org> and scroll down to the bottom of our home page.