

# AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

# PROGRESS REPORT

VOLUME 5 • NUMBER 2

MAY/JUNE 1998

## TRANSPORTATION SECRETARY PRAISES ZED

The Foundation went back to school on June 4, along with Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater. In a visit to the driver education classroom of Joey Hite at Langley High School in McLean, Virginia, Secretary Slater and Foundation President David Willis offered remarks on teen driver safety, answered questions, and observed teen drivers using the driver-ZED program.

"We appreciate what AAA is doing here," Slater said. "It's making transportation more intelligent by giving new drivers real-life experience through the use of technology." Emphasizing that safety is the Transportation Department's number-one priority, Slater said to the students, "You are a precious gift —you are our blessing. We want to work hard to ensure your safety as you come to the driving experience. And what an experience it is," he added, as students erupted into laughter.

Driver-ZED "teaches teens like you to scan the scene and identify risks," Willis said. "If you don't scan, bad things can happen." The program changes how drivers see, Willis continued. "When you've been through the program you'll look at the road differently. You'll look down the road farther, you'll look in your mirrors, you'll spot danger while there's still time to avoid it."

The Langley high school students responded to driver-ZED enthusiastically, crowding around the computer and commenting to each other as the scenes unfolded. The Foundation donated a computer and several copies of driver-ZED to the class so Langley students can continue to practice risk recognition in the safety of a classroom.



Secretary of Transportation Rodney Slater looks on with David Willis as Langley High School students try out driver-ZED

## AMERICANS ALERT TO DROWSY DRIVING DANGERS

More than three-quarters of Americans are aware or "very aware" of the danger of drowsy driving, a recent Louis Harris poll found. The poll was commissioned by Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety; president Judith Lee Stone said that since her organization was created, "we have been especially concerned about impaired driving and about drowsy driving caused by fatigue."

In looking at impaired driving caused by medication, the poll also found that 52 percent are "very aware" and 28 percent are "somewhat aware" that drowsy driving could be caused by medications.

Those who are presently taking medication recognize the risk more than other people. More than a quarter of respondents said they take drugs that cause drowsiness, such as allergy, pain, and high blood pressure medications, and 85 percent of them believe that stronger driver warnings are needed for these medications. "Thousands of

— continued on page 2

## INSIDE:

- New Video Tells Angry Drivers "Cool It!"* 2
- Wally Timmons Retires* 2
- Driver-ZED Kicks Off In DC* 3
- Driver-ZED Cruises Into Tampa Bay* 3
- The Right Way to Skate* 4
- A Cure to Road Rage?* 4

### **DROWSY DRIVING**—from page 1

American motorists may unknowingly be putting themselves and others at risk on our roads after taking common medications that promote fatigued and drowsy driving," Stone says.

In fact, many poll respondents believe that drivers generally could benefit from highway modifications designed to help drowsy drivers, such as rumble strips, which are grooves cut into the edges of freeways that create a loud hum or buzz when a car runs across them. Such devices have been found to dramatically reduce fatal crashes. Nearly all the respondents, 93 percent of those polled, favor building roads equipped with rumble strips. (The National Sleep Foundation estimates that rumble strips reduce drift-off-the-road crashes by between 15 and 70 percent.)

A similarly decisive 88 percent say they would find large, brighter, and better-lit signs and clearer pavement lines helpful. Clearer markings would also help the elderly and those who have trouble with night vision, and be more easily seen in bad weather.

Surprisingly, drivers are also strongly in favor of red-light running cameras — 65 percent of survey respondents think they're a good idea.

### **NEW VIDEO TELLS ANGRY DRIVERS, "COOL IT!"**

Does driving make you hot under the collar? The Foundation's new driver anger management video, now in production, shows ways to cool off red-hot road reactions. "When it comes to driving, it takes two to tangle," says Foundation president David Willis. "This video shows strategies that will help drivers relax, calm down, and drive more safely."

The video features two "ordinary guys" named Bill and Carl. They're alike in many ways—but not when they drive. One maintains a mellow attitude and takes traffic stress in stride, while the other blows up at trivial traffic problems. A narrator illustrates anger management principles with carefully staged driving footage and instructional vignettes to demonstrate how drivers can change from stressed-out to smooth. The video also offers testimonials from real drivers who have been through anger management courses and who testify how their experience helped them overcome their anger and become safer, happier motorists.

As an added benefit, the video includes several minutes of relaxation exercises that are also available in audiotape form. Using the techniques developed by Dr. John Larson, a psychiatrist who specializes in anger management specialist and author of *Steering Clear of Highway Madness*, drivers can use breathing and visualization techniques to get rid of harmful stress.

The completed video is expected to be available in late summer or early fall.

### **WALLY TIMMONS RETIRES**

After nearly 44 years of service, Wally Timmons, a long-time friend and supporter of the Foundation, retired from the AAA Tidewater club. Timmons has been on the Foundation's research and development committee since 1984 and has served as a technical advisor and information source for numerous Foundation videos.

"I really go back to the early days with work in the Foundation," Timmons says. "I have always enjoyed participating in the research and development committee meetings. I found that we always came up with some excellent projects. The Foundation has been a good supplement to the AAA traffic safety program."

At his retirement party this spring Timmons received numerous commendations for his work in promoting traffic safety legislation and traffic safety programs in Virginia. Organizations that honored Timmons included the University of Virginia, the Virginia General Assembly, the Naval Safety Center, and the Chesapeake Police Department, as well as from the AAA Tidewater club itself.

**Progress Report** is issued every other month by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, a not-for-profit, publicly-supported charitable educational and research organization. Visit our web site at <http://www.aaafoundation.org>

Address correspondence to Editor, AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, Suite 201, 1440 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005.

Telephone: 202-638-5944; Fax: 202-638-5943;  
E-mail: [aaainfo@aaafoundation.org](mailto:aaainfo@aaafoundation.org)

**AAA  
Foundation  
for Traffic Safety**

Contents may be reproduced with appropriate credits to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety.

© 1998 AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety

## **DRIVER-ZED KICKS OFF IN D.C.**

The Foundation's May 6 driver-ZED launch recognized the hard-working individuals who made this new high-tech teen driver training tool possible.

"We're delighted with driver-ZED and we believe it can have a huge impact on ten drivers," says Foundation President David Willis. We're very grateful to all those whose talent and dedication made this idea a reality."

Addressing a group of more than 70 Foundation supporters, along with the state troopers, software engineers, videographers, actors, and designers who cooperated in creating driver-ZED, Willis recalled long nights editing and some close calls — fully scripted, of course — when shooting footage for the project.

These near misses, designed to provide teen drivers with realistic experience before they get on the road, were staged by precision drivers from the Virginia State Police. Most viewers gasp while watching the footage, but the drivers, who were recognized at the event, report that such close calls are just the kind of thing they see on the road every day.

Interest in driver-ZED continues to grow. Just days before the kick-off, Washington's NBC affiliate mentioned the program in a special report profiling teen driver safety, and on May 13 driver-ZED was demonstrated to reporters at AAA's press conference on teen driver safety at the National Press Club.

## **DRIVER-ZED CRUISES INTO TAMPA BAY**

Four hundred Florida schools and 17 boys' and girls' clubs will receive copies of driver-ZED, thanks to the efforts of Auto Club South and Yoli Buss, Auto Club South's manager of Safety and Community Programs.

A recent press event on May 6 at Jefferson High School in Tampa, gave media the opportunity to participate in an actual driver education class incorporating driver-ZED. In addition to being a beta-test sites for driver-ZED, Jefferson High's driving range enabled television crews to shoot footage of local teens learning to drive.



*Dr. Deborah Blank, president of Electronic Learning Facilitators, receives a framed CD-ROM from the Foundation's David Willis.*



*Jesse Thompkins, one of the four driver-ZED teen hosts, views his performance on a computer monitor.*

Buss reports that media is still asking for demonstrations of the program and interest remains high. "Our media efforts have gone really well. We called radio stations and TV stations and they made appointments with the school and they went to the school and did stories. News Channel 9 has done stories for two weeks," says Buss. "Parents are calling me asking, 'What does it take to run driver-ZED? I want to get it for my son or daughter.'"

Buss says that the Auto Club South's insurance company is donating copies of driver-ZED and the club's new anti-drunk driving video to every high school in Florida. They're also setting up stands in club offices with brochures for driver-ZED and "Teaching your Teens to Drive."

"We're promoting them together," Buss says. "We're including articles in the magazine. A lot of people don't have the computer in the house, and

*— continued on page 4*

### DRIVER-ZED—from page 3

'Teaching Your Teens to Drive' has the video so they can show it at home."

Buss says the schools have been very enthusiastic and several have put driver-ZED in the library, where teens can borrow it. "They all love the computer and the fact that they can really interact with it," Buss says. "The kids say 'Gosh, I didn't realize there were so many places to look when you're driving.'"

## THE RIGHT WAY TO SKATE

Arline Dillman of the Automobile Club of Southern California drew the Foundation's attention to a problem with the recent **Progress Report** recommendation that in-line skaters to go with the flow of traffic.

The problem? "In California this is illegal," Dillman says. Some cities also have laws against skating on the streets (rather than the sidewalks) or other restrictions. Skaters should check their state laws before heading out into the road.

Many areas have inline skating organizations that can provide information. Skaters can also stop by a local skate shop, where the staff should be informed about restrictions.



## A CURE FOR ROAD RAGE?

If daily driving gets your dander up, try this sophisticated anger-management tool from Archie McPhee, a humor supplier in Seattle, Washington. McPhee's asks, "Have you ever found yourself sitting in traffic wondering...why everyone doesn't just step on the gas and go?!? Well, now you can take that road rage and stick it, with our new Commuter VooDoo."

This automotive voodoo doll includes an 8 x 4" stuffed cloth sedan, labeled with commuter curses ranging from "Dead battery" to "Road not on map" and "Alien Abduction." It also confers blessings like "Good gas mileage" and "New car smell." Five black pins stick the intended victim with the curses; white pins confer blessings. Science has not investigated the effectiveness of this device, however. Order "Commuter Voodoo" through the Archie McPhee web site, <http://www.mcphee.com> or by calling 425/745-0711.