

# Regional School Targeting Distracted Teen Driving

ERMA- “LCMR wants you alive, follow the law, be smart when you drive.” That’s the slogan Lower Cape May Regional High School is using for a safe driver campaign aimed at its students.

The campaign will use assemblies, displays in school hallways and online information.

Young drivers texting has become a huge problem, according to Karen Wadding, a health and physical education teacher at the regional school. One solution is apps available on smartphones that send out a prerecorded message announcing the phone’s owner is driving and cannot answer a text or call, she said.

“The urge to have to respond right away goes away because at least the person trying to reach the driver is getting a response,” said Wadding.

She said there is a minimal amount of texting as students drive to school in the morning.

“After school is when a ton of texting occurs,” said Wadding.

She noted texting takes your eyes off the road for 4.6 seconds and at 55 mph, that’s like driving the length of a football field, blindfolded.

In February, the school’s safe driving campaign focused on seatbelt use, estimated to be at 80 percent among students, she said. Students could take an online survey and sign a pledge to wear a seatbelt at all times when inside a vehicle.

On March 11, the school will host an assembly featuring Gabe Hurley who was involved in severe accident caused by a distracted driver. Hurley, 26, became blind as a result of the accident.

The school’s campaign will focus on speeding and impaired driving during March.

In April, distracted driving will be the primary topic with representatives of the South Jersey Traffic Safety Alliance on hand as part of the Share the Keys program. Share the Keys assemblies are held in August, October and May.

“If a student wants to park on school property, they’re required to go through this program with a parent or guardian,” said Wadding.

The focus of Share the Keys is a parent and child agreement stating the student with a restricted license will follow the regulations of not driving between 11:01 a.m. and 5 a.m., not have more than one friend in the car and not use a cell phone or any other hand-held electronic device.

In May, the safe driving program will focus on bike, pedestrian and motorcycle safety, in particular, how it relates here to the tourism industry. The school’s TV-media class will produce videos on the topic, said Wadding.

The school will submit a DVD or PowerPoint presentation of its entire safe driving campaign to the Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey. Lower Cape May Regional is one of 63 schools involved in the campaign. Each school received a \$1,000 stipend.

Wadding said two schools will receive a computerized driving simulator, an item on the regional school’s wish list.

