

Be up to date - Know the laws in your state

On September 1 a lot of changes in laws that relate to driving and driver education went into effect. Here is a quick rundown of some of the new laws in Texas, but please remember this is just a list of highlights. For more information you should contact your local law enforcement agency.

1. The restriction period under the state's graduated driver license law doubled in length. That means that new teen drivers will be prohibited from driving between midnight and 5 a.m. and carrying more than one passenger under age 21 for 12 months instead of 6 months. In addition, cell phone use will be prohibited for all drivers under 18.
2. New drivers will have to pass a driving test before getting a license. Since 1995 that test has been optional but is now required before you can get your license. The same law increased the required behind-the-wheel training in driver education courses from 14 hours to 34 hours.
3. All drivers and passengers have to wear safety belts, whether they are sitting in the front or the back seat, regardless of age.
4. Cell phones may not be used by anyone – regardless of age – in a school zone, unless the call is an emergency or is placed with a hands-free phone.
5. If you receive a DWI and there is a child passenger riding with you, you may lose your license.



For more information on changes to the laws check out http://www.t-driver.com/news/heads_up/

TDS part of the Distracted Driving Summit

When national leaders got together in Washington, D.C., on September 30 and October 1 to address the deadly trend of distracted driving, Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS) was an active player in the discussion.

TDS Director Russell Henk was among an exclusive group of transportation leaders and national safety experts who came together for the first-ever National Summit on Distracted Driving.

Henk said, "This was a huge opportunity for TDS and one more example that peer-to-peer influence is an essential part of reducing the frequency of teen driver crashes."

Other participants included senior transportation officials, elected officials, safety advocates, law enforcement representatives and academics.

TDS collected feedback on awareness of driving dangers and driving behavior from more than 18,000 teen drivers and passengers.

"We were able to share a lot of valuable knowledge about how distractions such as cell phones, texting and other teen passengers can create dangers for young drivers and passengers," Henk said.



Inside this Issue:

Good news in Texas for teen drivers	2
TDS wins Videographer and Telly awards	2
Introducing your teen advisory board	3
2nd annual TDS Summit	4
Summit shirt contest winner is in	4
Here or there, they wore their TDS shirts everywhere	5
Jourdanton FCCLA students receive honor	5
The teen perspective	6
What's going on in your area	7-8
Regional contacts and map	9
Director's Corner	10
Schools and calendar	11

Good news in Texas for teen drivers

A new study and findings from the Texas Transportation Institute show some good news for Texas teen drivers. The rate of fatal teen crashes is declining faster and more steadily in Texas than in any other state.

The study examines the trend in states with at least five years of crash records available after implementation of GDL. In those years, Texas has outpaced other states on a number of levels.

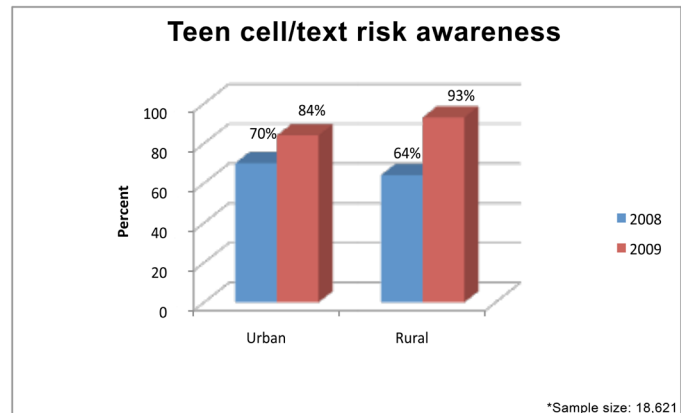
- The number of fatal crashes per 10,000 teenage drivers fell by 32.5 percent, the most of any of the states measured. Texas was also the only state to record a steady drop in the teen fatal crash rate for five straight years.
- The actual number of teen drivers in fatal crashes also dropped nearly 33 percent in Texas, while the average number for the nation's other 10 largest states increased slightly.

In addition, findings from an assessment conducted by the Teens in the Driver Seat Center, shows that Texas teen drivers are more aware of the danger posed by cell phones than they were a year ago, and they are less likely to use a cell phone while driving.

The findings were compiled from assessments of more than 18,000 Texas teenagers over the last two years and are the largest set of data of their kind in the U.S.

Assessments show that TDS program participants have boosted their knowledge of the most common driving dangers by up to 200 percent.

To find out more on the study and recent cell phone findings, go to [t-driver.com \(http://www.t-driver.com/news/tds_news/press_releases/2009_07-27.stm\)](http://www.t-driver.com/news/tds_news/press_releases/2009_07-27.stm).



TDS wins Videographer and Telly Awards

The Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS) program is adding to its list of honors with the news that the program has earned a pair of Videographer Awards and a pair of Telly Awards for television spots now on the air across Texas.

The first public service announcement, "I'm a teenager," features a series of teens speaking directly into the camera, relating firsthand the dangers faced by young drivers and the urgency of the issue in general. The second message, "Buckle up, dude," is the program's first music spot, addressing the lower-than-average rate of seat belt use by teens -- particularly when teens are passengers in the back seat. Together, the two spots have aired more than 2,000 times on TV stations statewide through an agreement with the Texas Association of Broadcasters.



Videographer Award

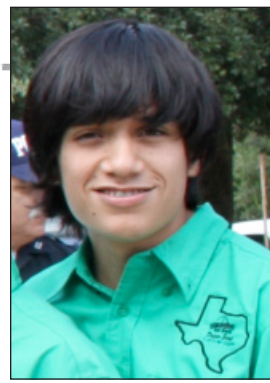


Telly Award

Both the Telly Awards and Videographer Awards honor the very best local, regional, and cable television commercials and programs, as well as video and film productions and work created for the web.



Victoria Banuelas



Oscar Cortez, Jr.



Alli Dalmolin

Introducing your Teen Advisory Board

The inaugural Teen Advisory Board's (TAB) term for Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS) has begun, and the board members have hit the ground running. The board consists of 13 teen members that represent eight cities across Texas. These members have already held three state-wide meetings, kicking off their term this summer at a press conference held at the Texas Capitol in Austin.



Albert Torres, Jr.

The 2009 - 2010 Advisory Board members are Luke Adkins (Lubbock Cooper High School in Lubbock, TX), Victoria Banuelas (Irvin High School in El Paso, TX), Oscar Cortez, Jr. (Vidal M. Trevino Magnet School in Laredo, TX), Alli Dalmolin (Alvin High School in Alvin, TX), Felicia Garcia (Mission Early College High School in El Paso, TX), Cori Hash (Archer City High School in Archer City, TX), Jaywin Malhi (Garland High School in Garland, TX), Brianda Reyes (South Garland High School in Garland, TX), Danielle Silva (Wanda R. Smith High School in Keene, TX), Fernando Sosa (United High School in Laredo, TX), Ashley Thompson (Keller High School in Keller, TX), Albert Torres, Jr. (Vidal M. Trevino Magnet School in Laredo, TX), and Erika Trujillo (Jefferson High School in El Paso, TX).



Felicia Garcia

The board is actively preparing to run the first Teen Track session at the 2nd TDS Summit on November 14 in El Paso. Members are designing the session to introduce attendees to Teens in the Driver Seat and the top five driving dangers. Fernando Sosa and Cori Hash are leading these activities.

In addition, the board is currently campaigning for their first election. Two co-chairs will be selected this month. The co-chairs, along with the other TAB members in attendance, will be introduced at the TDS Summit.



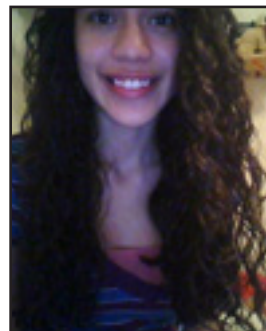
Cori Hash

The current board members have agreed to participate the entire school year. Their term will end on April 30, 2010. Each school year, a new Advisory Board will be selected through an online application process on the TDS web site. TAB members may serve more than one term, but they must re-apply and meet qualifications each year.

Please help us welcome the new Teen Advisory Board to the TDS family!



Danielle Silva



Brianda Reyes



Jaywin Malhi



Erika Trujillo



Ashley Thompson



Fernando Sosa

2nd annual TDS Summit scheduled for November 14

The 2nd annual TDS Summit will be held on Saturday, November 14, 2009, in El Paso, Texas, at the El Paso Community College (EPCC) Administrative Services Center. This one-day event will begin at 9:00 a.m. and end at 4:00 p.m. Please visit the Summit web site at <http://tti.tamu.edu/conferences/tds09/> for more details.

We are excited to announce that due to high interest in the TDS Summit, this event has already reached maximum capacity. Registration is no longer available, but you may sign up for the waiting list. Payment must be received from registered participants by Friday, October 23, 2009, or spaces will be filled with individuals from the waiting list.

If you are interested in sponsoring the 2009 TDS Summit, please e-mail [Kathy Montemayor](mailto:Kathy.Montemayor@tti.tamu.edu).

We look forward to seeing you in El Paso in November!



Summit shirt contest winner is in

This year teens were asked to think of their best design ideas for a t-shirt for the second annual TDS Summit. Participants were asked to send in their entries by October 2, for a chance to win a \$50 gift card, special recognition at the Summit, and of course a free t-shirt.

Congratulations to Ryan Lowery from Winnsboro, Texas, who won the summit shirt contest with this entry:



Here or there, they wore their TDS t-shirt everywhere

During their summer vacation Tabatha Angelo, Tim Lai, Sarah Johnson and Aly Schaffrick took pictures wearing their TDS shirt at a far-off or unique location, as part of the TDS Summer Shirt Contest. The winners each won a TDS summer surprise bag. To see all the pictures go to www.t-driver.com/activities/tds_shirts.



Tabatha Angelo wearing her TDS shirt in front of Big Ben in London, England.

Jourdanton FCCLA students receive honor

This summer Briana Escobar and Samantha Chapa from Jourdanton High School won first place in the interpersonal communication skills – senior division for Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), presenting their Teens in the Driver Seat program.



Briana Escobar and Samantha Chapa talk about the top dangers teens face behind the wheel as part of their FCCLA presentation.

After advancing to state competition, the two won first place and the chance to represent Texas at the national FCCLA leadership meeting in July. The team received the highest honors.

In their presentation they used a variety of tools to engage their audience. They showed a PowerPoint presentation, handed out brochures, designed a hallway display and gave a speech regarding the dangers of distracted teen driving.

They also had a texting obstacle course to simulate the hazards of distracted driving. Thanks to Briana and Samantha, more students have learned the importance of driving safety. Way to go, girls!

**TDS.
Not just for highschoolers anymore.
Find out more.**

To learn more about the Teens in the Driver Seat - Jr. High program go to <http://www.t-driver.com/jrhigh/>

The teen perspective

The dream of every teen is getting behind the wheel of a vehicle and obtaining one of those little plastic cards that allows them more freedom than they have ever had before. Many teens do it the right way, attending driving school or being taught by their parents, and then driving with a permit for those six very long months. Then you have the others that just sit, start the car, shift the car to drive and are on their way. Little do any of these teens know about the dangers, the true dangers, of driving.

What they need is a wake-up call. Too many times it comes down to something serious to happen in order for reality to hit. Driving is so much more than just getting from one place to another. Distractions and driving just don't go together, and that's something everyone needs to know. So what happens when that wake-up call hits? Will you be prepared? Will you be ready? I can tell you one thing, I wasn't, and this is my story.

Freshly 17, with a renewed license, and behind the wheel of my mother's 2006 Ford Expedition, what I thought was just a normal drive to the gym to pick up my younger sister from practice turned into one of my worst nightmares. I was at the stop sign, looked both ways, let the truck across from me pass and then proceeded up the road. My mistake, I forgot to look a second time. I was halfway through the intersection when the van struck me. She however didn't have a stop, and she had no intention of stopping. This accident was my fault. The next thing I could remember was seeing the face of one of the children in the opposite vehicle, eyes wide open, face flushed with fear. I could only imagine what I looked like, but I didn't have time for that. I was 15 feet from the collision, up the curb, my mother's vehicle destroyed, my hands shaking, my eyes watering, my head aching in pain, water splashed everywhere, the worst part was over, but recovering, now that in itself was hard. The door to the Expedition refused to open; I reached for my cell phone, but couldn't find it. The tears had started to flow, the pain was increasing, and then I heard the knock on the window.

I rolled the window down and heard the words I thought I never would have to hear: "License and registration. Do you have insurance?" While I sat there and pondered what the officer had just asked, I thought to myself, what happened to "Are you okay?" I reached across the car to the glove compartment, ready to scream in pain. After giving the officer the insurance card, and my license, I leaned forward, put my hand on the back of my head, and began to cry. I was shaken up, scared, and had no idea what was going to happen next. Moments later, a fire truck and ambulance arrived. After a firefighter pried the door of my mother's truck open, I was put onto a stretcher, and rushed to the hospital.

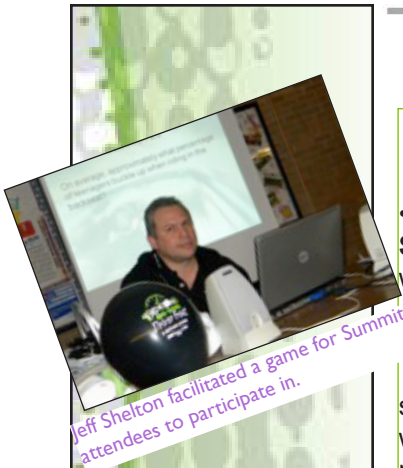
Thankfully, I was not seriously hurt, physically. Emotionally, however, I was devastated. I refused to drive for two and a half weeks; I was even paranoid when I was in the passenger seat of any car. This incident has truly scarred me for life, and when I think of the other teens, those who text behind the wheel, drive under the influence, or speed away down the highway, I think of what could happen, and pray. Some teens aren't smart about the decisions they make, others drive without a care in the world. But where will you be when it's your turn to take hold of the wheel, and drive off into your future.

I thank God everyday for my wake-up call, my second chance, and I hope that every teen whether it is their first time driving, or their millionth, practices safe driving, avoids distractions, and takes driving seriously. This isn't the game of Life, this is reality, and if the little pink car rams right into the little blue one, a little more is going to happen, because cars aren't plastic and cute; they're much more than that, they're life-threatening resources, and it is up to us to use them properly.



Brittany C. Sheets
Andress High School
El Paso, Texas

What's going on in your area?



Jeff Shelton facilitated a game for Summit attendees to participate in.

Austin TDS Reps. Casey Dusza

- **Hutto and Bronte High School** students have been working hard making plans for the new school year.

- **Mason High School's** student body president is working to get the TDS program started up at Mason High.

- **Katherine Anne Porter Charter High School** in Wimberly, Texas, will soon be completing pre-assessments as part of the TDS program.

- Teens in the Driver Seat was represented at the Texas Association of Student Councils (TASC) conference in Austin, Texas, on September 19.

- On November 3-4, Teens in the Driver Seat will be represented at the Stayin' Alive Conference in Tyler, Texas.

BCS/Waco & Yoakum TDS Reps. Bernie Fette, Jen Ross & Sam Holland

- The TDS program was presented at the Waco Teen Safe Driving Summit sponsored by Hillcrest Hospital's Teen Safe Program.

- **Colorado County 4-H** is working to start the TDS program.

- **Brenham High School** completed their pre-assessments and plan to join force between two organizations to promote the TDS program.

- **Caldwell High School** will launch their TDS program for a second year.

- **Midway High School** hosted their District VI Fall Convention for all middle school and high schools in the district to learn more about volunteer and safety opportunities. TDS was represented as part of the Fall Convention.

Dallas TDS Rep. Christie Madsen

- TDS is working with the Dallas ISD PALS program to start the program in their schools.

- TDS supported TxDOT's Click It or Ticket efforts with a teen focus. Plans are underway to involve a TDS team to be involved at the Texas State Fair.

- Attendees of the Family Consumer Sciences Teachers Association of Texas (FCSTAT) Conference in Dallas, Texas on August 4-5 learned more about the TDS program from the TDS exhibit booth.

- 4H's in Denton County attending the 4-H college gathering learned more about the TDS program.

El Paso TDS Reps. Llubia Corella & Jeff Shelton

- The University of Texas at El Paso's Upward Bound program is sending 60 students to the TDS Summit in El Paso.

- The 2009-2010 Mayor's 100 Teens plan to send a student group to the TDS El Paso Summit.

- On October 24, TDS will participate in the Girl Scout

Workshop to introduce the TDS Jr. High program.

- **Valle Verde College High School** is the newest school in the El Paso region to join TDS.

- **Irvin High School** hosted a Teen Driving Safety Night filled with fun, games and important information. The student council invited all schools in El Paso to attend, including middle schools. Jeff Shelton facilitated a TDS game to have the attendees win prizes. "Drunk goggles" were used to have students walk a straight line and try to catch a ball as well as other coordination activities. Victoria Banuelas, TDS Teen Advisory Board (TAB) member, discussed the importance of the Teens in the Driver Seat program and projects their group has planned for the current school year.

Houston TDS Rep. Lori Gray

- **Nimitz High School and Washington High School** are starting TDS at their school for the first time.

- **Cushing High School and Robert E. Lee (Baytown)** are joining TDS as 2nd year schools.

- **Sweeny High School** will be continuing TDS for its third year.

- **Fort Bend ISD** and their Safe Schools and Drug Free Campus district wide coordinator are ready to start the TDS program and continue their efforts from last year. The junior high schools are looking forward to starting the



Victoria Banuelas shared her TDS team's experience over the last year.

What's going on in your area?

new TDS-Jr. High program in their schools.

- Communities in Schools in Brazoria County will be using TDS as a community program in some of its schools.
- On June 25, Lori Gray presented to the group Changing the Face of Math and Science. This program affiliated with Texas A&M and Rice University, had over 20 high schools in attendance.

San Antonio

TDS Reps. Russell Henk, Krizia Martinez & Kathy Montemayor

- **Bandera High School** created a TDS float for their Homecoming.
- On August 23, Russell Henk presented TDS to teens and parents at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Boerne, Texas. The senior class president for Boerne High School also attended. The church youth group and Teen Life Program (a community-wide-effort) will continue to help spread the TDS program to its youth.
- **Southland, Hart, Happy, Tulia, Weslaco, New Home and Donna High Schools** students learned more about starting the TDS program.
- Lynn County Police Department learned more about the TDS program from a recent presentation.
- **PSJA Memorial High School and Bandera Middle School** kicked off their TDS program for the new school year.
- On September 30, Kathy Montemayor presented Teens

in the Driver Seat at the Alamo Association of Student Councils' (AASC) Fall General Meeting at the Blossom Athletic Center. The meeting was attended by 850 students representing over 35 high schools from Bexar County, Laredo, Eagle Pass and Del Rio areas.

Out of State

Connecticut

TDS Reps. Bernie Fette & Russell Henk

- The teams at **Bristol Eastern HS and Bristol Central HS** are working on video PSA creations to compete in a PSA contest sponsored by the State of Connecticut. They will be using TDS material to produce their video.
- The Bristol Eastern and Central teams will soon be working with two other area high schools to mentor the teams and help get TDS started in those schools.
- At the orientation program to welcome new freshmen and parents to their high schools and the beginning of the school year, the Central and Eastern teams gave a presentation about TDS activities and invited new freshman students to become involved as TDS participants and potential leaders.
- Bristol Eastern and Bristol Central will send student representatives to make a presentation at the TDS Summit in November.

California

TDS Reps. Russell Henk & Krizia Martinez

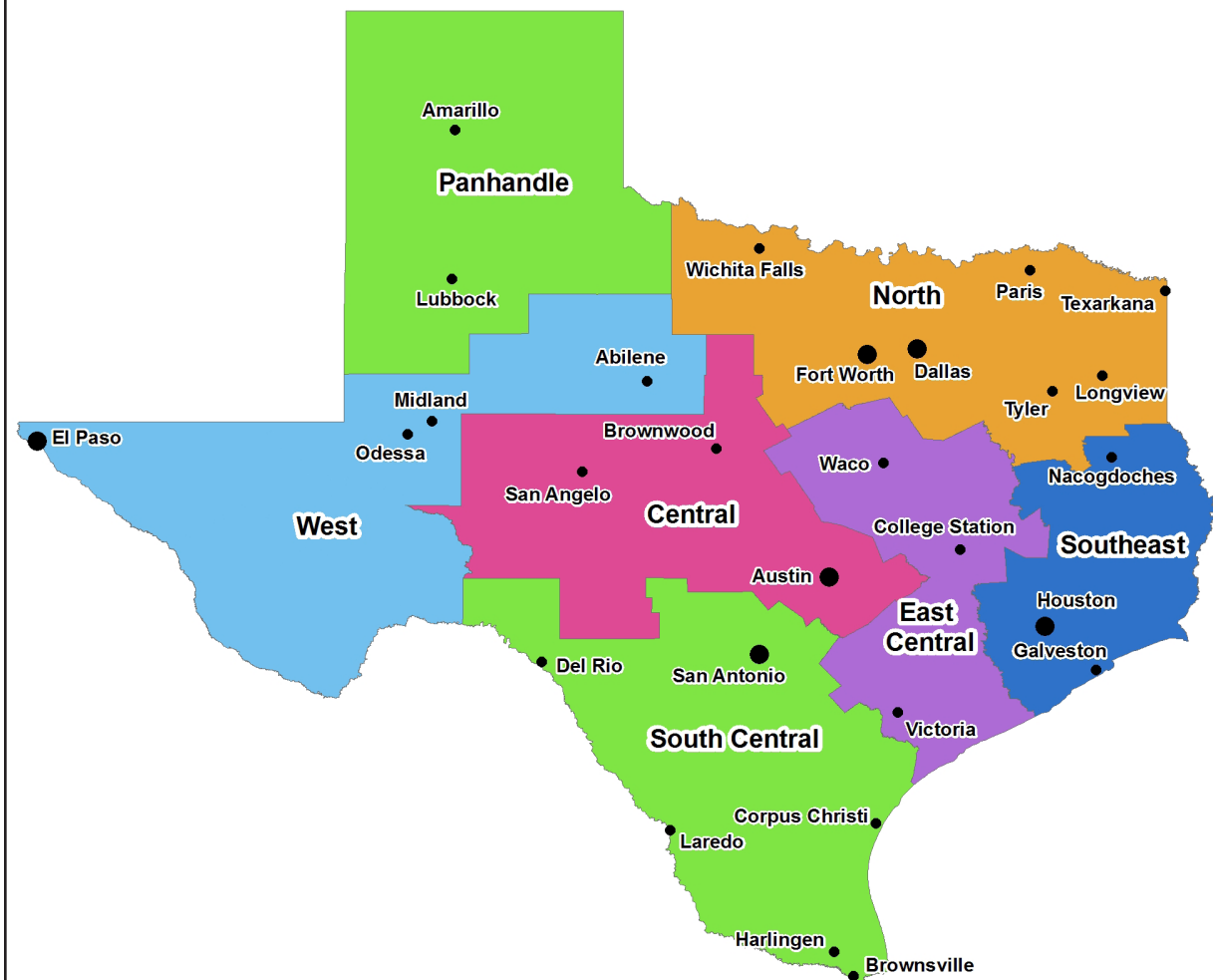
- Russell Henk and Krizia Martinez traveled to Anaheim, California on September 19-20 and presented TDS at the California Youth Traffic Safety Summit.

Georgia

TDS Reps. Russell Henk, Christie Madsen & Marsha Anderson-Bomar

- From August 30-September 2, Marsha Bomar and Christie Madsen exhibited at the Governors Highway Safety Association Conference in Savannah, Georgia.

TDS Regional Contacts



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Do you know teens who want to start TDS? Do you have an update to share? Does your TDS group need assistance?
 If so, find your location on the map and contact your regional coordinator.
 Not in Texas? Please contact Russell Henk or Bernie Fette.

Director's corner

We hope you enjoyed your summer and are ready for another active TDS year. We were excited to see over 180 schools actively implement the TDS program last school year and to honor 30 of those teams as Outstanding TDS Schools. We also welcomed aboard 13 students as Teen Advisory Board Members, and 7 teachers as 2008-2009 Sponstar winners. We are eager to help you continue the growth of the program and see the amazing ideas and resources you come up with this year. We hope to have even more Outstanding TDS Schools by May 2010 as we continue to work together to save young lives.

This summer, we continued to work hard for you. We launched a new junior high school version of TDS. Please encourage your local junior highs to participate. We have also been planning the 2nd Teens in the Driver Seat Summit in El Paso, Texas. We are looking forward to a full house on November 14. Your new Teen Advisory Board (TAB) has also been hard at work. The board has already met 3 times and will be holding co-chair elections this month. We will announce the TAB Co-Chairs at the TDS Summit. Please read about your board members in this edition. You can contact your regional board member(s) and share your thoughts, ideas, and/or concerns with them. They are an important new part of the TDS program leadership, so feel free to let them know what you think. We have also been tracking new legislation for you. Many new laws exist that impact both teen and adult drivers. Visit the TDS website at http://www.t-driver.com/news/heads_up/ for more details.

In July, the Texas Transportation Institute (TTI) released a white paper "After GDL, What's Next? The Role of Peer Influence in Reducing Car Crashes Among Young Drivers." Among other things, this document provides an overview of how the rate of fatal teen crashes is declining faster and more steadily in Texas than in any other state, thanks in part to [TDS] a growing program that uses peer communication to reduce the dangers for young drivers in combination with the graduated driver license (GDL) laws. The study examines the trend in states with at least five years of crash records available after implementation of a graduated driver license (GDL) law, and also illustrates the growth of the Teens in the Driver Seat program which augments the state's 2002 GDL law. In those years, Texas has outpaced other states in the U.S. in a variety of ways. For more details, or to read the white paper, please visit: http://www.t-driver.com/news/tds_news/press_releases/2009_07-27.stm. These positive changes and continual decline in teen crash deaths are not a coincidence. You really **are** making a difference with your efforts. Keep up the great work!

I was recently honored to represent Teens in the Driver Seat and TTI at the invitation-only National Distracted Driving Summit (http://www.usatoday.com/news/washington/2009-08-04-distracted-driving_N.htm) in Washington, DC. I was excited to share our program progress in Texas, Connecticut, Georgia and California with the rest of the nation.

With daylight savings changes approaching on October 31, we'll soon be driving in the dark at earlier hours. Please be aware that driving at night is one of the top risks for teen drivers. With football games and other evening events – be sure to plan ahead and be extra careful. The fall is one of the best times to start the TDS program at your school. If you haven't started yet – find your regional contact on page 9 of this newsletter and let us know you are interested. There are many ways we can help you get the program started. We are looking forward to a successful 2009-2010 school year. Thank you to our sponsors, the Texas Department of Transportation and State Farm Insurance of Texas, for their continued support of the TDS program. Together, we're making a real difference in which we can all take great pride and find motivation to continue our efforts. Thanks for all you are doing to help save teen lives.

Stay safe and watch for our next newsletter edition in December before the dangerous holiday break.

My best to you,
Russell



Russell Henk,
TDS Director



Bernie Fette,
Director of TDS Public
Affairs

Newest TDS Schools

- Andress High School (El Paso, TX)
- Ballinger High School (Ballinger, TX)
- Bandera High School (Bandera, TX)
- Bowie High School (Arlington, TX)
- Brady High School (Brady, TX)
- Brewer High School (Fort Worth, TX)
- Bronte High School (Bronte, TX)
- Bullard High School (Bullard, TX)
- C.C. Winn High School (Eagle Pass, TX)
- Christoval High School (Christoval, TX)
- Cigarroa High School (Laredo, TX)
- Creekview High School (Carrollton, TX)
- Cushing High School (Cushing, TX)
- Detroit High School (Detroit, TX)
- Dobie High School (Houston, TX)
- Donna High School (Donna, TX)
- Duncanville High School (Duncanville, TX)
- Eden High School (Eden, TX)
- Harmony High School (Big Sandy, TX)
- Holland High School (Holland, TX)
- Huntsville High School (Huntsville, TX)
- Jefferson High School (El Paso, TX)
- Jourdanton High School (Jourdanton, TX)
- Judson High School (Converse, TX)
- Lakeview Centennial High School (Garland, TX)
- Laredo Early College High School (Laredo, TX)
- Lindale High School (Lindale, TX)
- Lindsay High School (Lindsay, TX)
- MacArthur High School (Irving, TX)
- Malakoff High School (Malakoff, TX)
- Martin High School (Laredo, TX)
- Martins Mill High School (Ben Wheeler, TX)
- McKinney North High School (McKinney, TX)
- Naaman Forest High School (Garland, TX)
- Nimitz High School (Houston, TX)
- Nixon High School (Laredo, TX)
- Northwest Hills Christian Church (San Antonio, TX)
- Ore City High School (Ore City, TX)
- Quanah High School (Quanah, TX)
- Rockwall-Heath High School (Heath, TX)
- Sachse High School (Sachse, TX)
- Slidell High School (Slidell, TX)
- Stafford High School (Stafford, TX)
- Stockdale High School (Stockdale, TX)
- Sweeny High School (Sweeny, TX)
- Taft High School (Taft, TX)
- Valle Verde Early College High School (El Paso, TX)
- Vidal M. Trevino Magnet School (Laredo, TX)
- Wanda R. Smith High School (Keene, TX)
- Washington High School (Houston, TX)
- Winfree Academy Charter School (Grapevine, TX)

Go to **t-driver.com** and find us on Facebook, Myspace and Youtube. You could become **FAMOUS!**



Calendar

Teens in the Driver Seat will be exhibiting at these upcoming events:

- October 22 - 24 DESERT SPRINGS, CA – American Association of State Highway Transportation Officials Meeting
- November 3 - 4 TYLER, TX - Stayin' Alive: Building and Sustaining your Community Projects
- November 13 – 15 WASHINGTON, D.C. – Family Career and Community Leaders of America
- November 14 EL PASO, TX – 2nd Annual TDS Summit

Know of an event TDS should participate in? E-mail the information to [Jen Ross \(j-ross@tamu.edu\)](mailto:j-ross@tamu.edu)

