

Street Survival saves teen lives

By Mike Covello

Automotive Correspondent

You wouldn't think of sending your children to school without the proper immunizations; it'd be downright criminal.

Yet most of today's teenage drivers receive nothing but the most basic, minimum amount of driving instruction that your state requires. So how is this plan working out? Not well. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 7,386 people died in 2004 because of crashes involving 16-to-20-year-old drivers.

There are some outstanding programs for teenagers, such as Skip Barber's (www.skipbarber.com) New Driver Training; but that costs \$800, a sum out of reach for many families. The Tire Rack (www.tirerack.com) and the BMW Car Club of America Foundation (www.bmwccafoundation.org) have come up with a \$60 solution.

Back in 2002, they founded Street Survival (www.streetsurvival.org), which is designed to teach most of the skills necessary for life on the road today. My daughter has had her license for just over a year, and sadly, she's already had two at-fault accidents.

She's a good student, and understands more about the dynamics of driving than most girls her age. But her two lapses in attention have had some pretty big — and scary — results.

So that's why the two of us met up with a group of parents, teenagers and dedicated BMWCCA volunteers at 8 a.m. on a Sunday morning. It's hard to find a place to host these events, but the Hartford in Simsbury, Conn., had a few parking lots that proved suitable to the task, and were generous enough to offer their facilities.

We started with the basics. Every student's car went through a technical inspection, to make

sure the vehicle was safe. All loose items had to be removed, and a look under the hood revealed any glaring problems, such as loose belts.

The young men and women were taught how to adjust their rear view mirrors properly. No, you don't need to see your door handles in the side mirrors; they're not going anywhere, so adjust the mirrors out farther to reduce your blind spot. And of course, every student checked



A scenario where the students had to drive with trucks alongside helps them deal safely with the behemoths on the highways. They also climbed up into the cab to look into the mirrors to see how difficult it is to see cars next to the truck.

his or her own tire pressure with a complimentary Tire Rack tire gauge.

An outdoor classroom talk covered some safety fundamentals — keeping a proper following distance, looking farther down the road. Each certified BMWCCA instructor had two students to coach, so these fine folks worked even harder than the students, running from vehicle to vehicle as the boys and girls practiced their drills.

The exercises started with learning how to use brakes. Every student accelerated up to about 30 mph (it would have been 60 if the lot had been larger) and then practiced maximum braking. If the car had anti-lock brakes, the student needed to experience the sensation of pedal pulsing.

Many manufacturers have started adding emergency brake assist, which uses software to sense a panic stop and make sure

that the full power of the brakes is used. Street Survival teaches students the meaning of using all of the brakes' abilities.

Next up, the students entered a new series of cones and practiced hard braking combined with turning. Again, ABS technology made this exercise easier for those in vehicles with this modern invention. ABS doesn't necessarily shorten stopping distances; instead, its main advantage is the ability to turn while braking at maximum.

Lunch was provided, and after sandwiches, a couple of useful demonstrations took place. One of the BMWCCA members had arranged for an airbag demonstration. The bag was placed on a board, attached to a sign, hooked up to a battery, and then everybody stood back. We all were quite shocked at just how loud, violent and quick the explosion was. Once again modern safety devices can help us, but no one there would ever mistake an airbag for a "pillow-like device."

Another BMWCCA member drives for UPS and arranged for a tractor-trailer for a demo. Cars were parked alongside and behind this road behemoth, and the teen drivers took turns climbing up into the cab and seeing how difficult it was to see any of these cars. Only in the smaller panoramic mirrors were any parts of the car visible. Like the airbag show, this demonstration was a useful, graphic and memorable way of impressing on drivers the difficulties that are on the roads every day. We all were urged to empathize with the truck driver's limitations a bit more.

The afternoon driving exercises got a bit more intense. A slalom with different distances between the traffic cones was set up that taught students about turn-in points. The next drill had



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students accelerating toward a man with a flag, who at the last second indicated whether the student was to turn left or right. This one simulated real-life emergencies, where you only have a split second to recognize the stimulus, and then execute your turn.

The final exercises involved a water truck to wet down the parking lot. Students then went round and round; first in a circle then in alternating direction fig-

ure eights, which allowed them to experience the vehicles near their handling limits and feel what it was like to control the car successfully. Through all these exercises, the coaches were right alongside them to critique the students and help them understand what they were doing wrong and right.

My daughter summed it up this way. "The course is designed to put you and your cars to its

limits and to help you learn what to do when you get there. You don't learn skills for everyday driving; the skills you learn are ones you hope you never have to use," she said.

Tire Rack and the BMWCCA have created something special. If you have a new driver in the house, I strongly urge you go to the Street Survival Web site and find out when they'll be coming to your area.

Bryner celebrates 75th anniversary

By Mischa Aaron Arnosky
Staff Writer

To celebrate its 75th anniversary, David Peterson, general manager of Bryner Chevrolet in Jenkintown, wanted to offer something different. Sure, the showroom was rearranged, prominently displaying cars with 5.7, 6.0 and 7.0-liter V8s, but Peterson wanted something extra.

It was time to bring in the race team — the Chevrolet Race Team.

Peterson got in touch with the suits at GM in Michigan and obtained one of two traveling shows that tour the country. Luckily, the schedule of one of the teams coincided with Bryner's anniversary.

Peterson, whose grandfather Brady Bryner founded the dealership in the McKinley section of Abington, said it has been at its current location since 1953.



Staff photo by REGINA RAHILL

Four NASCAR race cars were on display outside the showroom during the 75th anniversary celebration at Bryner Chevrolet.

"I called over to our zoning manager to get the [Chevrolet aftermarket] parts show," Peterson said, "and I asked him, 'What else ya got?' He said, 'I think I might be able to get you the Chevy Race Team.'"

Bryner had the show stop by June 1 and 2 in the rear of its lot, which usually houses more, uh

... vanilla-flavored inventory. The event consisted of four race cars: the number 8 Nextel Cup car driven by Dale Earnhardt Jr.; the number 48 Cup car driven by Jimmy Johnson, an NHRA Cobalt drag racer producing 1,450 hp at 9,200 rpm from its

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