

# Driver educator BULLETIN

Newsletter  
of the Iowa  
Association  
of Safety  
Education



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## A WORD FROM YOUR PRESIDENT: NEW AND CONTINUED CONCERNS

Writing this message brings back many memories of serving as IASE's president the first time. I look forward to the challenges this year brings and anticipate this time around will be just as fulfilling as the last. Many areas of interest and concern have changed in the past eight years, though some have not.

One thing that hasn't changed is our annual fall conference. This year, it was held in Iowa City. The conference was a great success, and I'd like to mention just a few of the highlights here.

We were very excited to be able to arrange tours of the National Advanced Driving Simulator (NADS) for conference attendees. I hope those who participated in the tour found it as intriguing as I did. True, you can't take the technology back with you to your own programs, but just the opportunity to visit a facility like that is stimulating. That, you *can* take back.

The conference also provided an introduction to the Iowa Social Norms Project, a new approach

aimed at reducing college students' high-risk drinking behaviors. Students often overestimate how many of their peers actually participate in such high-risk behaviors. The project's aim is to show students actual drinking norms.

Speaking of the conference, one concern of mine that has not changed is the dwindling numbers in conference attendance and general membership. The IASE board has been working hard to better accommodate our instructors' needs and schedules and to enhance the conference and the association so more members will come on board. I challenge all who teach driver and traffic education in the state to get involved with IASE and help us raise our voice on issues that directly affect the profession and, of course, you.

Another issue that concerns us as an association is who will be claiming us as their own—the Iowa Department of Transportation or Education. As of this writing, the decision has

not been made. Whatever the outcome, we will have to adjust. We're staying on top of it for you and will let you know what transpires.

One last point I would like to make here is that we, as driver education instructors, can be our own worst enemy when it comes to showing that our programs are a valid necessity. Time and again, I hear about the teacher who falls asleep in the car or runs personal errands with their students in the driver ed. car, claiming that the students need the experience of going through drive-throughs or parking lots, etc. True, we can rationalize almost anything, but the public doesn't see it that way. In times where budgets are tight, it is even more important that we present ourselves as the professional educators we are. While you're in that driver education vehicle, you are not only representing your school, but all of us in the driver education field. What you do reflects back on all of us. I, for one, want that reflection to be the most positive it can be. Thanks. ✓

—Doree Ward

## KEY IASE PERSONNEL

### OFFICERS

**President**  
**Doree Ward**  
 Newton, IA  
 515-791-9697 (h)  
 ward\_doree@mail1.newton.k12.ia.us

**1st Vice President**  
**Terry S. Garrett**  
 Indianola, IA  
 515-961-2835 (h)  
 515-967-6631 (w)  
 springdale@uswest.net  
 garrett@se-polk.k12.ia.us

**2nd Vice President**  
**Daron Van Helden**  
 Burnsville, MN  
 952-402-0377 (h)  
 952-707-4985 (w)  
 952-707-4220 (fax)  
 daron.vanhelden@mn-ia.aaa.com

**Past President**  
**Lisa K. Sears**  
 Ames, IA  
 515-292-6689 (h)  
 515-239-3710 (w)  
 love2drive2@yahoo.com

**Business Manager**  
**Curt Hanson**  
 Fairfield, IA  
 641-472-3349 (h)  
 641-472-2059 (w)  
 hansoncu@fairfield.k12.ia.us  
 hansoncu@lisco.com

### BOARD MEMBERS

**Mike Gee**  
 Denison, IA  
 712-263-4212 (h)  
 712-263-4192 (w) ext. 233  
 gwhiz@frontiernet.net

**Al Hart**  
 Ankeny, IA  
 515-964-8235 (h)  
 ahart@norwalk.k12.ia.us

**Ken Huelman**  
 Vinton, IA  
 319-472-2291 (h)  
 319-436-4728 X719 (w)  
 rkhuelman@peoplepc.com

**Tim Linder**  
 Iowa City, IA  
 319-354-1739 (h)  
 319-688-1040 (w)  
 linder@iowa-city.k12.ia.us

**Mike J. Pesky**  
 Sioux City, IA  
 712-277-8210 (h)  
 712-279-6786 (w)  
 drvcrzy14@aol.com

## UPDATE ON GDL

Iowa has had graduated driver licensing (GDL) for three years now, and the program seems to be a great success.

According to Iowa Department of Transportation figures, in 1999 (the first year of Iowa's GDL law), 16-year-old drivers experienced a 20% reduction in moving violation traffic convictions and a 10% decrease in crash rates from the year before. In the second year of the GDL program (2000), moving violations for 16-year-old drivers dropped another 27% and crash rates for the group decreased another 10%.

The GDL program increases parental involvement and requires 16-year-olds in Iowa to pass through a restricted intermediate license stage. Drivers "earn" full driving privileges by driving accident-free and conviction-free for 12 consecutive months.

The high crash, injury, and death rates for young, first-time drivers have been a concern for driver and traffic safety educators for years. GDL seems to be a step in the right direction. ✓

## TWO PROMISING PARENT-TEEN PROGRAMS

Two new initiatives seek to reduce the losses associated with crashes involving teen drivers. And both put parents, as well as the teens, "in the driver's seat."

### "I Promise" Program

The "I Promise" program has been described as a new initiative to take over where graduated licensing leaves off. The program includes two primary components:

(1) The teen and his or her parent(s) must complete a nine-page contract that identifies mutual expectations with respect to car privileges and maintenance, driver behavior, and rewards and consequences.

(2) A real window decal identifies the driver as a novice and invites the community to call in reports, positive or negative, about the driver's driving. The calls are taken by a call center, and the call reports are then sent to the parent(s).

The program works through partnerships with automobile insurance companies. "I Promise" is currently being adopted by some

Canadian insurers. The program's director, Gary Drenfeld, is "trying to break through to the American insurers." The program is expected to save the U.S. insurance industry more than \$3.2 billion annually.

For more information, go to [www.ipromiseprogram.com](http://www.ipromiseprogram.com).

### AAA's "Teaching Your Teens to Drive"

The American Automobile Association (AAA) has developed a program of its own with many of the same goals. "Teaching Your Teens to Drive" is founded on the premise that parents should model good driving habits and techniques as they are likely to be copied by their children.

As part of the program, AAA provides a handbook and a 50-minute video/CD-ROM program containing 13 lessons. The lessons focus on developing many important driving skills, including visual search habits, freeway and night driving, and driving on slippery surfaces.

These program materials can be ordered at 1-952-707-4466. ✓

## MAKING THE CONNECTION BETWEEN DRIVER EDUCATION AND TEEN SLEEP

“Sleepiness causes auto crashes because it impairs performance and can ultimately lead to the inability to resist falling asleep at the wheel.” That was the common-sense conclusion of a 1998 study by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and National Center on Sleep Disorders Research.<sup>1</sup> In just a few short years since then, a great deal of interesting and useful research has been made at the intersection of sleep deprivation, adolescent sleep patterns and needs, and driver safety issues.

Two of the highest risk populations for drowsy driving crashes are shift workers and young people. “Young drivers age 25 or under cause more than one-half of fall-asleep crashes,” according to the National Sleep Foundation,<sup>2</sup> based on a study of over 4,000 crashes in which the driver had fallen asleep but was not intoxicated.<sup>3</sup>

Left to their own internal clock, most teenagers would stay up later and sleep in longer than they did before puberty. Sleep experts call this adolescent sleep pattern the “phase-delay preference,”

and it has a biological as well as psychosocial basis.<sup>4</sup> Teens need 8.5–9.25 hours of sleep each night, but they are getting only 7–7.45 hours of sleep on average.<sup>2</sup>

The result? Many adolescents build up a “sleep debt” and consequently may have impaired or divergent thinking skills, attention lapses, decreased reaction times, and higher rates of accidents and injuries.<sup>4</sup> Sleep deprivation not only negatively impacts driving, it also has the potential to erode a teenager’s capability to learn to their full potential, which is particularly disarming when the teen is at the age when they are establishing their driving habits and learning essential driving skills.

Some have suggested that “many teenagers will have fewer problems if they are allowed to start school at a time that accommodates their biological tendency to delay circadian (24-hour) rhythms.”<sup>5</sup> In fact, several school districts across the country have adopted later start times, and systematic studies in Minnesota suggest that this measure is beneficial.<sup>6</sup>

Educators may want to consider communicating to their students strategies for preventing drowsy driving. Many materials are available to help expand driver education curricula in this area.

The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute has developed a brochure called “Awake at the Wheel” targeted at teenagers. It is available on the web at [www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/sleep/aaw/awake.htm](http://www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/public/sleep/aaw/awake.htm). Also, the Simmons Company, the mattress manufacturer, has recently released a related video aimed at teens. The video—called “Who Needs Sleep?”—is available by contacting Eric Langley, Simmons Company, One Concourse Parkway, Suite 600, Atlanta GA 30328. ✓

<sup>1</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the National Center on Sleep Disorders Research, *Drowsy Driving and Automobile Crashes*, 1998.  
<sup>2</sup> National Sleep Foundation, *Adolescent Sleep Needs and Patterns*, 2000.  
<sup>3</sup> “Characteristics of Crashes Attributed to the Driver Having Fallen Asleep,” *Accident Analysis and Prevention*, Dec. 1995.  
<sup>4</sup> National Center on Sleep Disorders Research, *Educating Youth about Sleep and Drowsy Driving*, 1998.  
<sup>5</sup> “The Sleepy Teenager,” *The Harvard Mental Health Letter*, Nov. 2001.  
<sup>6</sup> Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, University of Minnesota, *School Start Time Study*, 2001.

### KEY IASE PERSONNEL

#### BOARD MEMBERS, CONT.

**Terry W. Rew**  
Iowa City, IA  
319-338-1583 (h)  
319-338-1583 (w)  
[twdriverseducation@avalon.net](mailto:twdriverseducation@avalon.net)

**Tom Stull**  
Council Bluffs, IA  
712-322-2253 (h)  
712-328-6493 (w)  
[tstull@council-bluffs.k12.ia.us](mailto:tstull@council-bluffs.k12.ia.us)  
[stull108@aol.com](mailto:stull108@aol.com)

**Clem Walleiser**  
Dubuque, IA  
319-583-5197 (h)  
319-588-5131 (w)  
[cwalleiser@dubuque.k12.ia.us](mailto:cwalleiser@dubuque.k12.ia.us)

**Brian White**  
Cedar Rapids, IA  
319-866-9829 (h)  
319-398-2226 (w)  
[bwhite@esc.cr.k12.ia.us](mailto:bwhite@esc.cr.k12.ia.us)

#### SERVICE AGENCIES

**University of Northern Iowa**  
**Paul Waack**  
Cedar Falls, IA  
319-268-1369 (h)  
319-273-2533 (w)  
[waackp@uni.edu](mailto:waackp@uni.edu)  
[paul.waack@uni.edu](mailto:paul.waack@uni.edu)

**Lobbyist**  
**Craig Walter**  
Des Moines, IA  
515-278-8700 (w)  
515-278-0245 (fax)  
[walterl@netins.net](mailto:walterl@netins.net)

**AAA**  
**Daron Van Helden**  
Burnsville, MN  
952-402-0377 (h)  
952-707-4985 (w)  
952-707-4220 (fax)  
[daron.vanhelden@mn-ia.aaa.com](mailto:daron.vanhelden@mn-ia.aaa.com)

**Department of Education**  
**Marvin Hrubes**  
Des Moines, IA  
515-281-3353 (w)  
[marvin.hrubes@ed.state.ia.us](mailto:marvin.hrubes@ed.state.ia.us)

**Department of Transportation**  
**Toni Kerkove**  
Waterloo, IA  
641-394-3379 (h)  
319-235-8032 (w)  
319-235-9674 (fax)  
[toni.kerkove@dot.state.ia.us](mailto:toni.kerkove@dot.state.ia.us)  
[dkerkove@rcnnet.com](mailto:dkerkove@rcnnet.com)

**A complete IASE membership list is online:**  
[www.ctre.iastate.edu/iase/](http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/iase/)

**PLAN ON ADTSEA CONFERENCE**

This year, the American Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA) conference will be held August 4–8 at the Double Tree Hotel in Overland Park, Kansas. This is the closest the conference has been to us in awhile. If you've never attended the conference before, this is a great opportunity.

IASE is an affiliate of ADTSEA, so it would be great if we could have a large Iowa showing there! For more information, go to ADTSEA's website: [adtsea.iup.edu/adtsea/default.asp](http://adtsea.iup.edu/adtsea/default.asp). ✓

**IASE'S WEBSITE:**  
[www.ctre.iastate.edu/iase/](http://www.ctre.iastate.edu/iase/)

**YOUR FEEDBACK NEEDED ON IASE'S 2001 CONFERENCE**

We need your input on what we did right at IASE's 2001 conference and what we need to do to make the 2002 conference even better. Please take a moment to complete this evaluation and return it to me.

1. What did you like about the IASE 2001 conference?
  
2. What did you not like about the IASE 2001 conference? What would you change?
  
3. What topics would you like included at future conferences?
  
4. Other comments.

Send completed forms to:  
**Doree Ward**  
President, IASE  
Newton High School  
800 East 4th Street South  
Newton, IA 50208  
FAX: 641-792-0005  
Thank you very much!

The *Bulletin* is published twice a year for the Iowa Association of Safety Education (IASE) by the Center for Transportation Research and Education at Iowa State University. Subscriptions are free to IASE members.

Articles are written by IASE members and others interested in promoting safe driving. Submit articles for consideration to any board member (see pages 2–3). The information and opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the IASE.

For information about IASE, contact President Doree Ward (see page 2). For information about the *Bulletin*, contact Mark Anderson-Wilk, editor, 515-294-8103, [maw@iastate.edu](mailto:maw@iastate.edu).

**IASE BULLETIN**

801 N. Court  
Fairfield, IA 52556-2235

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