

North Shore Safety Coalition

quarterly newsletter

June 2015

Covington Police Catch Students in the Act of Buckling Up



The Covington Police Department in May launched another round of its popular “I Got Caught” campaign, designed to encourage high school students to buckle up. Officers visited local high schools where they checked to see whether student drivers were wearing seatbelts. Those properly restrained received T-shirts that proclaimed “I Got Caught” on the front side and “Wearing My Seatbelt” on the back. Students not properly buckled were told about the law requiring seatbelt use in the front and back seats of a vehicle and why wearing a seat belt is so important in reducing the risk of death and serious injury in a crash. Covington Police Chief Tim Lentz says he hopes the campaign will help to impress upon teen drivers the importance of safe driving practices, particularly during the summer months when they will likely be spending more time on the roads.

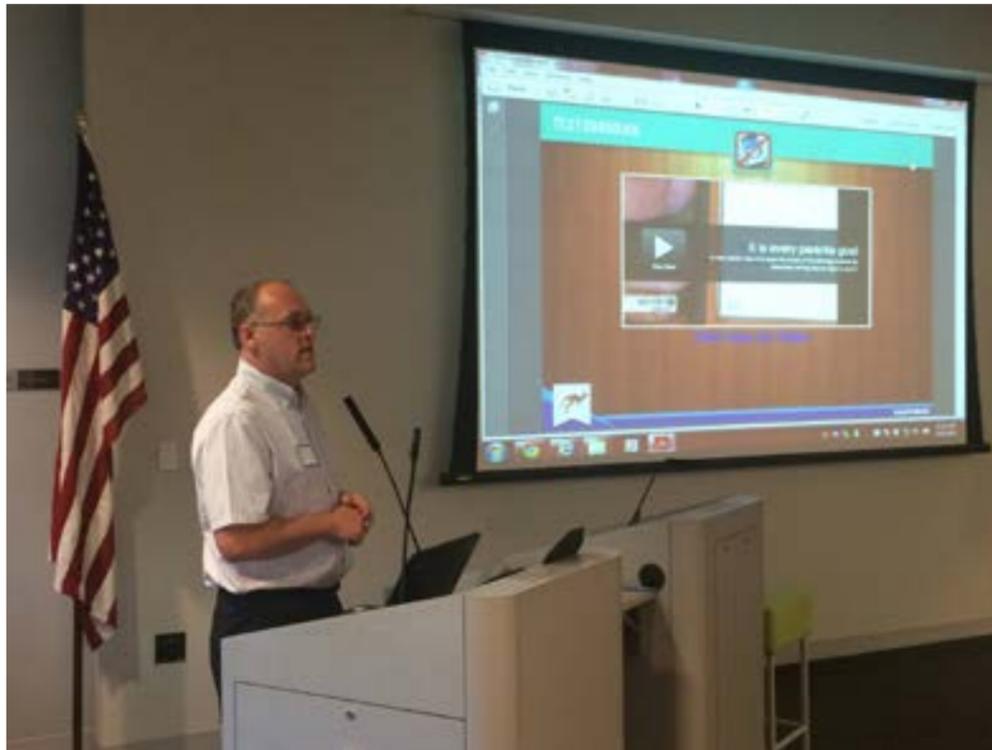
Saved By the Belt: Family Recognized for Buckling Up



The LaCoste family, pictured in the photo at left with Bridget Gardner of the Interim LSU Level 1 Trauma Center and State Police Trooper Patrick Dunn, was recently recognized with a Saved By the Belt award after their involvement in a multi-vehicle crash on I-12 in St. Tammany Parish. The LaCostes, a family of five, were all properly restrained when they were rear-ended by a distracted driver. Dunn and Gardner visited the childrens’ school to present them with the award in front of their classmates and take the opportunity to talk to them about the importance of proper seat belt use.



LaPlace Bodyshop Owner Unveils App to Prevent Teen Driver Cell Phone Distraction



Mike Watson, developer of the anti-texting-while-driving app Text Guardian, speaks to the New Orleans Regional Transportation Safety Coalition meeting in March.

A new smart phone app geared toward teenage drivers could help to reduce distraction-related crashes and save lives. So hopes its progenitor, LaPlace body shop owner Mike Watson, who developed the app in conjunction with Wayne Vicknair.

Watson, who owns Jim's Body Shop, says he was inspired to do something after seeing too many news reports about the texting-while-driving epidemic and seeing too many customers come into his shop after getting into texting-related crashes.



The result: Text Guardian, an app currently available for free on Android phones that Watson hopes to expand to iPhone soon.

Once installed, Text Guardian makes a cell phone mostly unusable while driving except for making emergency calls. Parents who install the app on their

children's phones can register to be alerted should their child delete the app.

Texting while driving is illegal in 46 states, including Louisiana, yet a troubling number of drivers do it anyway. Thirty-five percent of teen drivers admit to texting while driving, according to AAA.

Uber Arrives in N.O.

Uber is now in business in New Orleans, after the City Council approved legislation in April allowing for similar companies to operate ride-share in city limits. Uber's higher-end service, Uber Black, was green-lighted in September. The City Council's most recent vote allowed for the lower-cost UberX service to operate, despite protest by the taxi industry. Ride-sharing services such as Uber and Lyft link customers with drivers in private vehicles via smart phone app. San Francisco-based Uber is interested in expanding elsewhere in the region. Some have credited these services with helping to reduce drunk-driving.

AAA: Teen Driver Distraction Worse Than Previously Thought

Teenagers are much more susceptible to distraction while driving than previously thought, according to a study released in March by the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety. The study involved an analysis of close to 1,700 in-vehicle camera videos involving moderate-to-severe crashes among drivers 16 to 19 years old. AAA billed the research as "the most comprehensive" of its kind ever conducted. Researchers said the data point to distracted driving being a much more serious problem than previously thought: a factor in nearly 6 in 10 moderate-to-severe teen crashes, four times greater than official estimates based on police reports.

The National Transportation Safety Administration estimates distraction to be a factor in just 14 percent of teen crashes, according to AAA.

The most common forms of distraction uncovered in the analysis? Distraction by passenger and cell phone.

Researchers found that teen drivers talking, texting, or otherwise manipulating their cell phones had their eyes off the road for an average of 4.1 out of the final six seconds leading up to a crash. The researchers also found that teen drivers using a cell phone failed to react by braking or steering more than half of the time before the impact in rear-end crashes.

AAA recommends that state law prohibit cell phone use by teen drivers and that teen drivers be restricted to one non-family member passenger for the first six months of driving.

"Louisiana has addressed one key AAA recommendation by prohibiting cell phone use by teen drivers and making it a primary offense," AAA spokesman Don Redman said. "However, Louisiana's passenger restriction law needs strengthening."

Current state law restricts the number and ages of passengers allowed in vehicles driven by novice drivers under the age of 17, but lacks any provision for novice drivers getting their unrestricted licenses for the first time at age 17. AAA recommends a minimum six-month restriction on teen passengers as a precondition to licensure for all teen drivers.

AAA also notes that parents play a critical role in preventing distracted driving. The organization recommends parents teach teens about the dangers of cell phone use and restrict passengers during the learning-to-drive process.

Teens have the highest crash rate of any group in the United States. About 963,000 drivers age 16-19 were involved in police-reported crashes in 2013. Those crashes resulted in 383,000 injuries and 2,865 deaths.

91 percent of parents who use their cell phones while driving do so when their teenage children are in the car.
--National Safety Council

6 OUT OF 10 teen crashes involve driver distraction.

The most common forms of distraction leading to a teen driver crash include:





Videos Show How to Navigate Bicycles, Cars, Transit Vehicles More Safely

The Regional Planning Commission and Destination Zero Deaths have produced a series of videos aimed at improving public understanding of how to safely navigate bicycles, cars, and transit vehicles in the streets. The videos, available on the New Orleans Regional Planning Commission's YouTube channel at <http://tinyurl.com/pzrdq8p>, educate viewers on the rules of the road for bicyclists, how to drive safely around bicyclists, and how to operate transit and large commercial vehicles around bicyclists. The videos were produced to help to improve safety practices among all road users at a time when the number of people getting around the region by bike is on the rise. New Orleans now ranks fifth among the country's large cities for the rate of people who bicycle commute to work. The New Orleans Regional Transportation Safety Coalition is exploring possible channels for distributing the videos. Have a great idea for where these might be used? Contact Dan Jatres at djatres@norcp.org.

Expect the Unexpected: Promoting Work Zone Safety



Work Zone Awareness Week was commemorated March 23-27 with events held across the state and country to bring attention to the fatalities and serious injuries that occur in roadway work zones. In 2013, 579 people died in work zone-related crashes across the country. Eight of those fatalities occurred in Louisiana.

At a press conference in Baton Rouge, Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development Secretary Sherri LeBas noted that three DOTD employees were seriously injured on the job in recent months, a prime example of the importance of driving safely and attentively through work zones.

"We are all in this together," Louisiana Highway Safety Commission Deputy Director Ken Trull said. "Everyone is responsible for work zone safety, from engineers and planners to drivers and pedestrians."

North Shore Safety Coalition Co-coordinator Tricia Keffer, at podium, speaks at a press conference held at the Regional Transportation Management Center in New Orleans about the importance of drivers watching out for vulnerable users, including people working in work zones. Also pictured, from left, are Interim LSU Level 1 Trauma Center Program Coordinator Bridget Gardner; Louisiana State Police Troop B Captain Donovan Archote; and DOTD District 02 Administrator Chris Morvant.

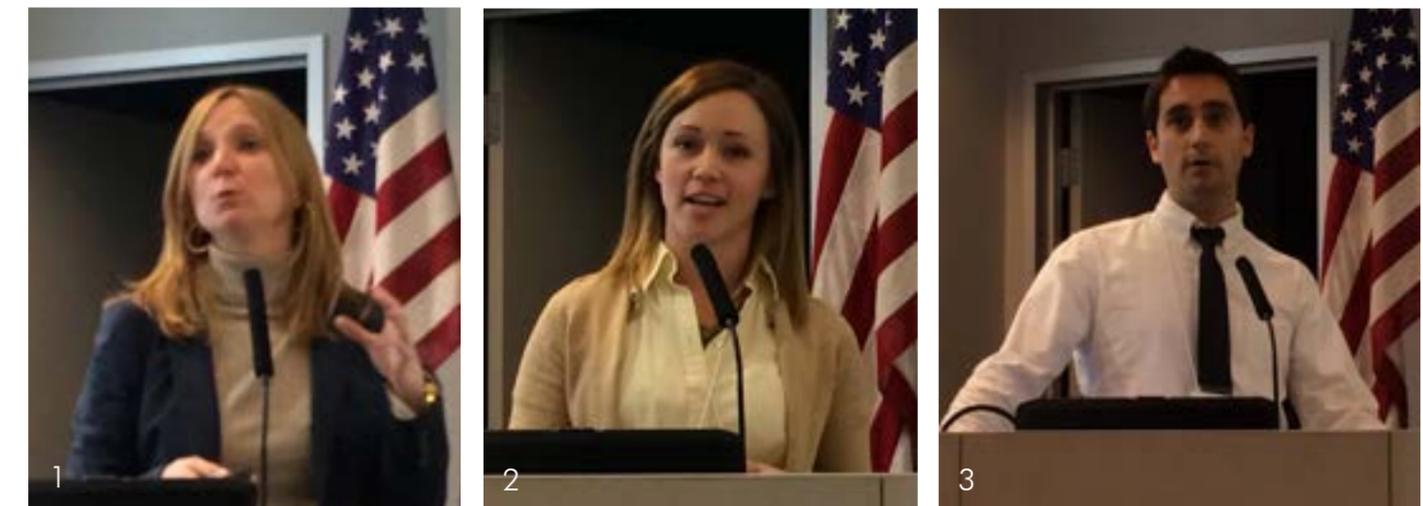
North Shore Coalition Stakeholders Honored by LHSC for DWI Work



The Louisiana Highway Safety Commission honored several members of the North Shore Safety Coalition during their annual DWI Awards on March 24th in Baton Rouge. Troop L received an award for making the most DWI arrests of any Louisiana state police troop, the seventh year in a row that the troop has received this distinction. According to Captain Paul Clark, Troop L made 1,125 DWI arrests in 2014. Additionally, Assistant District Attorney Le'Anne Malnar of the 21st Judicial District received the Prosecutor of the Year Award.

According to data from the Highway Safety Research Group, from 2008 to 2013 in the North Shore region, crashes involving an impaired driver have decreased from 195 to 108, injuries have decreased from 227 to 102, and fatalities have decreased from 45 to 27. Both Prosecutor Malnar and Captain Clark recognized the team effort required to accomplish this, and stressed the importance of working together to reduce the number of crashes that occur as a result of drinking and driving. Troop L's partnership with TRACC, for example, will soon allow them to conduct No Refusals 24/7 in Tangipahoa Parish.

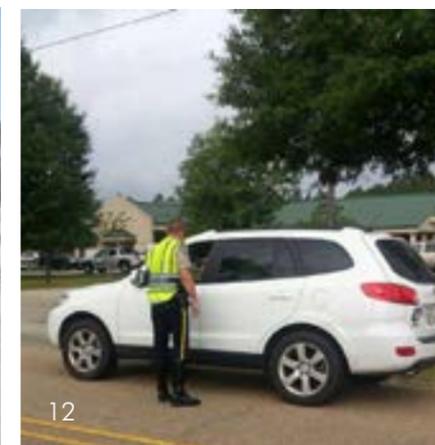
Coalition Stakeholders Talk Safety at Traffic Engineering Conference



Several people directly engaged in regional and statewide highway safety planning efforts spoke at a gathering of the Deep South Institute of Traffic Engineers, held in New Orleans in February. Among them, clockwise from top left, were: 1. Betsey Tramonte, safety programs coordinator with the Federal Highway Administration, who with FHWA's John Broemmelsiek (not pictured) gave an overview of the agency's Roadway Lighting Handbook and the importance of roadway lighting to improving roadway safety; 2. DOTD Highway Safety Engineer April Renard, who outlined the systemic approach to highway safety that Louisiana is employing in certain circumstances. The systemic approach is a proactive strategy that involves identifying risk factors associated with crashes and can help to improve safety even in areas where crashes haven't already been recorded; and 3. Jose Rodriguez, also with DOTD, who updated the group on the state's efforts to install cable median barriers, which can significantly reduce the chances of fatalities and serious injuries caused by vehicles crossing over medians on divided highways.

AROUND THE COALITION

1. Lafayette City Court **Judge Doug Saloom**, a member of the committee responsible for helping to rewrite the state's Operating While Impaired statute, spoke about the changes and other matters related to reducing impaired vehicle operation across Louisiana at a **Southeast Louisiana DWI Task Force** meeting in Kenner. Among the most important changes: a revamped format that clarifies the rules and penalties; a new penalty for underage impaired drivers; and stiffer penalties for repeat third offenders; 2. **Claude Maher**, left, and other representatives of Louisiana Operation Lifesaver, distribute information about safety around trains at the Louisiana Police Jury Association's annual meeting in New Orleans. 3. Representatives of several regional transportation safety coalitions, including the **North Shore Regional Safety Coalition**, gathered at the Louisiana State Capitol in May to call attention to the work these coalitions are doing. 4. **Sgt. Ryan Impastato** with the St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office Traffic Division gave a presentation on motorcycle safety for the Harley Owners Group (HOG) of Hammond. Members of the STPSO Traffic Division are available to speak with non-profit motorcycle and church groups about motorcycle safety and other traffic-related topics. Call 985-726-7810 for information. 5. **Rudynah Capone**, of the Local Road Safety Program, presents on the findings of road safety assessments conducted on two high-crash corridors on the North Shore. The report included recommendations for short-, medium-, and long-term fixes to help improve the safety along these roadways. Road safety assessments (RSAs) are interdisciplinary analyses that look at safety challenges on particular roads and suggest possible interventions. They can be initiated through regional safety coalitions. 6. **Carlton Dufrechou**, general manager of the Causeway Commission, spoke to the North Shore Regional Safety Coalition about safety challenges on the well-traveled bridges connecting to the North and South shores.



7. **The Tammany Trace**, a scenic 27-mile trail through St. Tammany Parish, is featured as one of 10 destination trails nationwide in Trail Traveler, a digital tablet magazine. 8. Crash data are one of the key tools used to identify transportation-safety problems and shape interventions. **Ron Whittaker**, retired state trooper and current DOTD law enforcement expert, is teaching classes for law enforcement officers and engineers designed to improve crash-reporting techniques and accuracy. Whittaker will happily teach the class to any law enforcement agency requesting it. 9. The **TRACC Coalition** held its annual Youth Leaders Rally in April, where topics included underage drinking and impaired driving. Over 100 students participated this year. 10. Architect, urban designer and author **Ellen Dunham-Jones** spoke at the RPC in March about her ideas for redeveloping declining suburbs. Chief among them: improving walkability, cutting vehicle speeds, and creating attractive places to live while improving safety. 11. **TRACC** and **State Police Troop L** completed a high school seatbelt survey and education campaign early this year. The campaign focused on proper seat belt usage and was conducted at four high schools in Tangipahoa Parish. It was bookended by seat belt checks. Compiled data from the checks showed that compliance rose from 71% to 80% after the campaign. During the post-survey check, compliant drivers were given coupons for a free Frosty while a warning ticket was given to unbuckled drivers. 12. Members of the **St. Tammany Parish Sheriff's Office Traffic Division** spent some time in May educating drivers on the state law that restricts cell phone use in school zones. 13. A multidisciplinary group including members of the North Shore Safety Coalition gathered in Baton Rouge for a pedestrian- and bicycle-specific road safety assessment along Siegen Lane. The RSA, hosted by the **Federal Highway Administration**, looked at ways to improve the landscape for pedestrians and bicyclists along the high-traffic, high-crash corridor.



Child Seat Checks every Tuesday in Mandeville

Louisiana State Police Troop L hosts free child safety seat inspections every Tuesday from 3 to 6 p.m. Certified technicians are on hand at that time to teach proper installation and fit. Technicians also check for any pertinent recalls. The checks are held at 2600 North Causeway Blvd. in Mandeville. Call 985-893-6250 for more information.

Local Road Safety Program 2015 deadlines

Local Road Safety Program applications are accepted year-round, but priority consideration will be given to proposals submitted according to the schedule below. The remaining quarterly project selection cutoff dates for 2015 are as follows:

2nd Quarter	June 30, 2015
3rd Quarter	September 30, 2015
4th Quarter	December 31, 2015

Visit www.louisianalrsp.org for more information.



ON THE CALENDAR

JUNE 4: North Shore Regional Safety Coalition meeting, Mandeville City Hall, 3101 East Causeway Approach

JUNE 6: Louisiana Passenger Safety Task Force car seat event, Tyler Square in Covington

JULY 2-6: Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over enforcement wave

JULY 14: Statewide Young Drivers emphasis area meeting in Baton Rouge

JULY 29: Statewide Occupant Protection emphasis area meeting in Baton Rouge

AUGUST: Back to School Safety Month

AUGUST 13: Statewide Impaired Driver emphasis area meeting in Baton Rouge

AUGUST 6: North Shore Regional Safety Coalition meeting

AUGUST 21-SEPTEMBER 7: National Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over enforcement wave

SEPTEMBER 10: North Shore Regional Safety Coalition meeting

SEPTEMBER 13-19: Child Passenger Safety Week

OCTOBER 8: North Shore Regional Safety Coalition meeting

OCTOBER 20-22: 2015 Louisiana Highway Safety Summit, Baton Rouge

The New Orleans Regional Traffic Safety Coalition

The New Orleans Regional Traffic Safety Coalition (NORTSC) is one of nine similar bodies across the state formed to implement and sustain Louisiana's Strategic Highway Safety Plan by bridging gaps between the Louisiana Department of Transportation and Development, local governments, law enforcement, public health representatives, educational leaders, civic organizations, the general public and other safety stakeholders working in Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, and St. Bernard parishes. For information, contact Tricia Keffer at tkeffer@norpc.org or Emilie Bahr at ebahr@norpc.org or visit www.norpc.org/safety.html.

