

Safe Driving Teen Monthly Bulletin

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"Nickel" from Nicole: fatal crash anniversary renews safe-driving commitment

Loose change can be found rolling around in most vehicles, but the isolated nickel on Jeff LeGrow's dashboard has an indescribable meaning to him and those who knew his daughter.

Source: <http://www.planostar.com> ♦

Lessons Learned

It often takes a tragedy to get people to sit up and pay

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For Teens and their Parents



attention and this story is no exception. Nicole LeGrow was a 16 year old girl from Plano Texas; she was popular in her school, played sports and did very well in her studies. On July 8, 2010, she accepted a ride with a friend. Police said her friend was driving over the posted 70 mph speed limit and, in the rain, lost control of her vehicle. The car struck a large sign post in the middle of the roadway killing Nicole.

After her death, her parents received a letter from Lance Lanier, one of her friends. In the letter he described how Nicole got her nickname of "Nickel" and said that he now kept a nickel on the dash board of his car to remind him of her and to remember to drive safely.

Inspired by Lance's letter, Nicole's parents, Jeff and Sharlene LeGrow started the "Nickel from Nicole" campaign. They started by printing out 5,000 cards with a picture of Nicole, the wrecked vehicle, and a short description of Nicole along with the events leading to her death. The back of the card contained a copy of the letter written by her friend Lance.

A shiny new nickel was attached to each card with the hope that the recipient of the card would stick the nickel on their dashboard to remind them of the senseless tragedy of Nicole's death and to remember to drive safely.

After passing out the first 5,000 cards, requests started pouring in for more from as far away as North Carolina. What started as a small gesture has grown and the response from around the nation has surprised and gratified the LeGrows.

To keep the campaign going and to get the word out to more teen drivers, the LeGrows have started a web site. They are planning a "Nickel" 5K Run in October to raise funds for more cards.

All cards are free and anyone who wants one can request one via email at:
info@NickelFromNicole.com.

You can view the "Nickel" from Nicole website by visiting: <http://www.nickelfromnicole.com>. From there, you can find information on ordering cards, sign the guest book, and make donations if you wish.

Teen killed in crash trying to avoid dog on road

A 17-year-old girl trying to avoid hitting a dog in the road was killed Thursday night when her pickup flipped.

Source: [http:// http://jacksonville.com](http://http://jacksonville.com) ♦

Wreck Sunday claims another life in deadly weekend

A teen died in a car accident early Sunday when his car flipped about 1 a.m. as he tried to avoid hitting deer in the middle of the road.

Source: <http://www.independentmail.com> ♦

At least two teens in the US and one in Canada died

over the last month after swerving to avoid hitting an animal in the middle of the road and losing control of their vehicles.

An ongoing problem that teen drivers face is how to control a car once it leaves the road. So many teens are killed this way because, once they feel the car leave the road, they instinctively turn the wheel sharply to return to the road, often causing the car to skid sideways and flip. This instinctual act is known as "over-correcting" and it can be very dangerous.

There are times when drivers face hard choices in the road; whether to swerve or to turn in a direction that will still lead to a crash but minimize the crash damage.

No one wants to hurt an animal but sometimes, the choice has to be made to either kill the animal or yourself. In that case, it is an easy choice. Of course, large animals such as deer or horses can do a lot of damage to the car but in that case, the choice should be made to minimize damage to the vehicle without consideration as to the health of the animal.

Teens should be taught how to recover a vehicle that has left the road. This maneuver can be practiced on the edge of an empty parking lot or at low speeds on a deserted road.

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To successfully recover, once the wheels leave the road, the driver should:

- Fight the instinctual urge to jerk the wheel back onto the road;
- Firmly grip the steering wheel;
- Take your foot off the gas pedal and allow the car to slow on its own;
- Look ahead and make small steering changes to keep the vehicle on the shoulder and avoid obstacles;
- Gently apply the brake to slow the vehicle down to a safe and manageable speed;
- Check the rearview mirrors to make sure it is safe to return into the traffic flow;
- Once the car has slowed, and it is safe to return to the road, turn the wheel just enough to steer the vehicle back onto the roadway;
- Once the vehicle is back on the roadway, steer gently to center the vehicle in the lane.

Teens need to practice this procedure more than once if they are going to overcome the natural tendency to over-correct. If they have practiced it enough, their instinct will be to take the proper action rather than to over-correct.

Another sign of a good defensive driver is the continual mental process of always looking for an escape route, should an obstacle appear in the roadway.

We are heading into the worst part of the year for deer running across the road. Deer are most active during the fall months and usually, if there is one deer, there are more close by. If you see a deer's eyes in your headlights, slow down and be prepared in case one or more should dart across the road.

Tips for Parents: Parents Are the Key

We have been saying for a long time that parental involvement is the key in trying to keep your teen alive on the road. The studies and teen surveys have backed that up. Now the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in Atlanta has joined in that effort with a website called "Parents Are the Key"; <http://www.cdc.gov/ParentsAreTheKey/index.html>

There is a lot of good advice on this website including;

- **"Proven Steps Save Lives** - Practice driving as often as you can with your teen. The more experience he or she has behind the wheel, the safer they'll drive."
- **"A Parent-Teen Driving Agreement Sets the Rules of the Road** - Discuss your rules of the road with your teen. Talk about why they are important to follow, as well as consequences for breaking them. "
- **"Parents Must Lead by Example** - Don't wait until your teen is old enough to drive to start modeling good driving behaviors."
- **"Other Parents Need This Information** - Share your rules of the road with parents of other teens."
- **Links to state Graduated Driving License Laws (GDL)**

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