

Traffic Safety

Neighborhood Traffic Safety – It's No Accident!

By *Tom Everson,*
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of Keep Kids Alive Drive 25®

We hear the word "Accident" often. Anytime a crash occurs or child is hit by a car we hear it referred to as an accident.

Yet how many tragedies are accidents? If a driver is exceeding the speed limit on a neighborhood street, or any roadway for that matter, and hits a child crossing the street, running after a ball, or riding a bike, is that an accident?

Consider these facts from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration:

- Most speeders on local roadways live right in the neighborhood.
- If you hit a pedestrian:
 - At 20 mph 5% will die
 - At 30 mph 45% will die
 - At 40 mph 85% will die
- Pedestrian fatalities increase by 3 times when moving from 25 mph to 30 mph zones.
- Local roadways, including residential streets, have a fatality rate per miles driven over 2 times higher than on highways.

Driver behavior is crucial to creating a safe environment for everyone using a roadway. Controlling speed is no accident. It is a responsibility to insure safety for others and for ourselves. No one wants to be behind the wheel and hit a child, or pedestrian of any age. Safe driving behavior is no accident. It is a decision we make each time we get behind the wheel.

The national non-profit Keep Kids Alive Drive 25® is committed to working with communities to involve and educate residents about how to make neighborhood streets safer. This includes children playing, bike riders, pedestrians of all ages, drivers, and passengers. It takes the commitment of parents, law enforcement, city services, schools, businesses, and city government working together to create safe streets for the benefit of all. Creating safe neighborhood streets is no accident.

Keep Kids Alive Drive 25 began in August 1998 in Omaha, Nebraska. Since that time the campaign has grown to encompass initiatives in over 1000 communities representing 48 states plus Washington DC, two Canadian Provinces, and the Bahamas.

Along the way many families have become involved in the effort in memory of their own children, hit and killed on neighborhood streets, often by a speeding or inatten-

tive driver. Some have worked on legislation to help create safer neighborhood roadways.

These include Barbara Foster of Mesquite, Texas, whose son, Kyle, was hit and killed while crossing the street on Halloween of 2003. House Bill 87, signed into law in 2005, made it easy for Texas municipalities to lower residential speeds from 30 to 25 mph by taking away the need to do extensive, and expensive, engineering studies to justify lower speed limits to protect pedestrians, cyclists, drivers, and their passengers.

Sean Martin initiated a local ordinance in Miami Lakes, Florida to reduce the speed limit entering school zones. This is the "Shaye Martin Keep Kids Alive" law created in memory of his 8 year-old son who was hit and killed while he was walking on a sidewalk, by a speeding motorist (60+ mph) in a school zone.

The intent of Keep Kids Alive Drive 25 is to be proactive in our efforts. It should not take the death of a child to wake us up to the opportunity to make a difference today.

Cities have joined the cause by establishing Traffic Safety Committees to bring together residents, law enforcement, public works and city officials, schools, businesses, and civic groups to develop plans to implement Keep Kids Alive Drive 25 communitywide. These include expecting parents to monitor their children and establish safe places to play. The street is not a playground. It means teaching children how to cross the street correctly and safely. It means buckling up for each and every trip no matter the distance. It means observing the speed limit and slowing down when we see children ahead, or when visibility is poor. It means paying attention to potential hazards such as a parked car a child could be hiding behind. These are all quality of life concerns that we ourselves have the power to address.

When communities mobilize they see results. The City of Oceanside, California saw a 16% decrease in average neighborhood speed upon implementing Keep Kids Alive Drive 25. The City of Oro Valley, Arizona realized a 13.5% decrease when they placed Keep Kids Alive Drive 25® decals on every residential trash can for curbside pick-up. On average drivers were moving at average speeds of below 25 mph. That's no accident. 🌟

Learn more about how your neighborhood and community can make a difference in creating safe streets for all. Visit www.KeepKidsAliveDrive25.org, email kkad25@kkad25.org, or call 402-334-1391.

