

DID YOU KNOW???

LEARNING FROM OUR DRIVING MISTAKES CRITICAL

At a recent community forum held by the Malone Central School District, the guest speaker was Willow Sweeney, who works for Top 20 Training, a Minnesota-based educational consulting organization. She focused on encouraging parents to let their children make mistakes – and that errors are an important part of learning, and of life. “There’s a lesson to be learned every time you make a mistake”, she said.

So how does that relate to traffic safety? Well, every existing driver, and every potential driver who will someday operate a vehicle has made mistakes or will make mistakes – that’s a given. Like the guest speaker said at the school forum, the important thing is to learn from those mistakes, and not repeat them. The difference in students learning from their mistakes and drivers learning from theirs is that, for drivers, they are sometimes fatal, or come with serious injuries.

A child that gets a shock from poking something into an electrical socket probably won’t do it again. Likewise, a child that touches a hot pan on a stove learns that doing so hurts, and respects that possibility in the future. A teenager that falls from a tree he or she was climbing will be more careful when climbing again. We, as parents, can be protective but cannot hover around our children all the time to prevent them from making mistakes. As Sweeney told the audience at the forum, mistakes are opportunities for learning, not for criticizing or belittling.

The same thinking should apply to driving a vehicle. Since we all make mistakes when driving, the solution is to learn from them. When we first get our license, we really haven’t had a lot of experience in all types of driving. We may get our permit in the spring, take our test in the summer, and with the first snowfall, experience slippery roads for the first time. If we have never driven on snow and ice, how slow do we need to go to prevent a skid? I don’t know an experienced driver, including myself, that never skidded on slippery roads at least a few times. Unfortunately, the first time could be fatal, but most likely, it will only result in damage or perhaps minor injuries. It may only result in a skid and not colliding with any other vehicle or object. The important thing is that this should be a real opportunity to learn something about slippery roads.

Likewise, if we are passing someone and another vehicle is coming toward us, it may result in only a close call, but we should learn a lesson about passing. If we are driving on an interstate highway and attempt to change lanes much too close to another vehicle, we learn about blind spots and that in the future we must look more carefully before changing lanes.

Life is a constant learning process. We learn as kids, students, and adults. We all make mistakes from toddlers to grandparents. Those of us that learn from our mistakes and don’t repeat them are rewarded; those that don’t face the consequences. As a driver, please learn from your mistakes, and thus you will continue to improve your driving.

For more information on traffic law and traffic safety, visit the Traffic Safety Board web site at: www.franklincony.org and go to Traffic Safety Board under “Departments”. Visit us on Facebook as well. You may also contact me by email at: dwerner151@verizon.net or call me at 483-1882.