

## **DID YOU KNOW???**

### **PEDESTRIANS NEED TO BE VIGILANT AT CROSSWALKS**

We continue to hear about how difficult it is to cross streets in Malone and Saranac Lake, and how drivers fail to give pedestrians their rights when crossing in crosswalks. However, there is a significant onus on pedestrians to be vigilant when crossing. Regardless of who should yield to whom, the bottom line is that when a vehicle and pedestrian collide, the vehicle will win every time – that’s just physics 101!

Recently, as I approached the crosswalk at the corner of W. Main and Webster streets in Malone, the crosswalk at the YMCA, two young teenage boys were crossing. Yes, they did push the pedestrian walk button, activating the flashing yellow beacons, and, yes, traffic did stop as required by law. However, as soon as the two boys started to cross, they both were looking at their smart phones the entire cross – never once did they check traffic to make sure that the drivers were indeed going to stop for them. Four lanes of traffic – apparently they just assumed that because the beacons were flashing that all traffic would stop. In this case, traffic did stop and the boys crossed successfully. But no one should EVER assume that all drivers will obey vehicle and traffic laws. Indeed, EVERY driver bends or breaks traffic laws every day, even if it’s exceeding the speed limit by a few miles per hour, or not coming to a complete stop at a stop sign.

The lesson to be repeated in this article is that no one is more responsible for our own safety than we are. At crosswalks, this means not only crossing with the walk signal if there is one, but with green lights if there is no pedestrian signal. It also means that even if we are crossing legally, make sure that drivers are also doing what they are supposed to be doing by LOOKING at oncoming traffic – making eye contact with drivers is an excellent safety tactic.

Here’s another tactic for small children to use. I have two grandchildren, six-year old twins, in Saranac Lake. Their kindergarten class, when crossing a village street in a group, has each child hold their hand up over their head, to add some height for better visibility to motorists, an innovative safety action that is sure to get drivers’ attention.

Now a word of caution to parents – are you aware of the laws that pertain to pedestrians? If not then learn them. Have you taught your child how to properly cross a street or road safely? Have you crossed with them enough to know that they know how to do so safely? Have you observed that he/she actually does cross safely when you are not crossing with them? Remember, children learn from their parents and other adults, so if we are not doing things right, neither will our children.

In the case of the crosswalk at the “Y”, first, push the button to activate the beacons, and then move to the edge of the road and look at traffic coming from your left to make sure the motorists are indeed stopping. If they are, then start across, looking at traffic in each and every lane to be certain they are stopping, and if you are not sure, wait until you are certain. As pedestrians, we must be responsible for our own safety when competing for space with motor vehicles. To not do so could be deadly.

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