

DID YOU KNOW???

STUDENTS' AWARENESS OF DRIVING DANGERS SIGNIFICANT

On May 3rd, the Franklin County Traffic Safety Board held its Enforcement Recognition breakfast at the Akwesasne Casino in Hogansburg. The purpose of this annual event is to recognize two officers from each enforcement agency in the county for their contribution to traffic safety through enforcement. As part of the program, three students from the Driver Education class at Franklin Academy were also recognized for their award-winning essays on traffic safety. This article, with permission from the students, will highlight the three award-winning essays.



Jenna Smith presented her essay on **distracted driving**. She portrays a fictitious story about a teenage driver that just couldn't refuse to read a new text message from her best friend. The problem for the young driver is that when she looked up from reading the message, she had crossed the centerline and was just about to crash into an 18-wheeler. "One quick glance up is all it takes to now know how you will die."

In addition to a deceased teenager Jenna points out the consequences to the driver's family and friends that this one mistake caused. "People will tell them you're in a better place now, but that won't help. Your mother will lay awake at night for weeks thinking about you and your last conversation. Your father will stare blankly at the walls for hours thinking about every milestone you had, and every milestone you won't have. Your friends will call your phone for months just to hear your voice say the same six words, 'Hey it's me, leave a message'."

Jenna concludes with a strong message – don't text and drive! It's not just you being affected.

Cameron Normandeau says **driving in wintry weather** is something all drivers in the North Country must learn to do. Education on skills and preparation are paramount to success in navigating snowy roads. Experience, however, is vital to safe winter driving. "There are some methods and driving habits on slick roads that can only be learned through experience", says Cameron. He advises equipping your vehicle with snow tires, checking your vehicle's fluids, and keeping emergency supplies in your vehicle, all good ways to prepare for winter weather driving.

Cameron says that the most important aspect of driving in the winter is slowing down. A driver's control of the vehicle on slick roads is much greater at lower speeds than it is at high speeds. No matter how good a car's tires or four wheel drive system is there is always potential for the vehicle to lose traction, especially at high speeds. Simply slowing down would prevent most collisions in wintry weather.

The third essay, written by **Shan Johal**, is about the dangers of **impaired driving**, accounting for nearly one-third of all traffic-related deaths in the United States. Shan points out the importance of telling a friend who is impaired that they have had too much to drink and drive home. That's what a true (and smart) friend would do.

Shan is acutely aware of the signs of an impaired driver, like turning with a wide radius, straddling the centerline or lane marker, swerving or weaving, driving more than ten miles per hour below the limit, following others too closely, erratic braking or

stopping inappropriately. He advises “If you ever see anyone trying to make a bad decision about driving impaired, be that good friend and guide them in the right direction. Who knows your one little comment of ‘let me get you a cab’ might save their life or the lives of other drivers on the road.”

The TSB thanks Stephanie Marsh, Driver Ed instructor at FA, for providing the opportunity for the students to write about traffic safety. And, our thanks to all three students for their insight into traffic safety and their willingness to tell their stories to a room full of police officers. Hopefully they will also spread the word to others.