

I Promise Program aimed at reducing teen driving injuries

—Gary Drenfeld, Executive Director, I Promise Program

I promise to drive safely

I promise not to drink and drive

I promise to use my safety belt

I promise to drive defensively



In February 2000, Gary Drenfeld, the parent of a soon to be 16 year-old was commuting to Toronto from Hamilton at 5:30 am. While following a transport truck he was overtaken by a young driver weaving speedily through traffic. Noticing the 1-800 number on the back of the truck for reporting poor driving, he thought that he would very much like to be able to notify the parents of the speeding young driver of their teen's dangerous driving. Concerned about the safety of his son, Drenfeld began searching and reviewing statistics with respect to teen drivers and reviewing injury prevention programs targeted to teen drivers. In June 2000 the first model of the *I Promise Program* was completed.

The *I Promise Program* provides a mutual agreement between parents and teens to drive safely and responsibly. The contract also provides an opportunity for the parent and child to write in rewards for safe driving, and consequences for poor driving.

"From the parent's perspective, they have to provide a vehicle in good mechanical repair, because often the youth is driving on bald tires with no brakes," Gary Drenfeld said. It is also important to keep in mind that even when the teen attends driver's education, the parent remains the most important factor in teaching and modelling driving behaviour.

"From the teen's perspective, they dis-

decals are central to the commitment and contract of safe driving between parent and teen. It signals to the teen that the parent accepts the responsibility as a role model and it signals to the parent the teen's maturity in accepting the responsibility of safe driving. The rear-window decal serves as an on-going reminder to both parties of their mutual obligations and responsibilities to each other and the community as they are driving.

"So good or bad, members of the community can make reports on driver behaviour," said Drenfeld. "The report is taken by a call centre and forwarded only to the parent of the driver."

For more information, call I Promise at 905-628-4847, e-mail gary123@sympatico.ca or visit their website at www.ipromiseprogram.com.

Automobile crashes are the leading cause of death and permanent injury in teens.

—Canada 1999

- 410 Canadian teens lost their lives
- 29,321 were injured
- Teens are 3 to 4 times more likely to be involved in an automobile crash than any other age group

As a teen starts driving, parents and teens begin scrutinizing each other's driving behaviour. Parents are watching the teen's every move with concern for their safety, knowing that car crashes are the leading cause of permanent disability and death for teens. Meanwhile, teens begin paying attention to the parents' driving behaviour looking for discrepancies between what their parents say and what their parents do.

Discuss with the parent such things as distractions—cell phone use, volume of radio and number of passengers. All the things that correlate to crash statistics," Drenfeld continued.

The contract between parent and child remains within the family and is sealed with a public commitment to safe driving – a rear-window decal that displays a "How's my driving?" message with a 1-800 number to call. The rear window

A good driver is someone who:

- understands the risks of driving and takes steps to avoid them
- thinks that driving is a serious task
- looks out for others
- understands and complies with the rules of the road
- uses the skills of safe driving
- respects the power of vehicles
- always drives as safely and responsibly as possible

—Reprinted from *Tuning Up: A Manual for New Drivers and Co-Pilots*. ICBC 1998.

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