



PITTSBURG, KANSAS

Program's goal is to improve teen driving

By KATIE STOCKSTILL
Morning Sun Staff Writer

Every day in the United States, 23 teens will die in a motor vehicle accident.

Mark Horowitz has set out to try to change that statistic. As the creator of the **Drive** program, Horowitz is traveling not only the state of Kansas but the entire country, trying to change the way driver education teachers approach teen driving.

"I want to teach them to stop being teachers and start being coaches," Horowitz said. "But it doesn't stop there, I want students to learn, which means remembering and applying it to life."

On Friday, area driver education teachers gathered at the Holiday Inn Express in Pittsburg to participate in the Drive Program and learn how to make their teen drivers safer on the roads.

During his program, Horowitz presented eye-opening and startling facts to the teachers showing just how many teen drivers die on American roads each year. He also talked about teens and what makes them click.

"Teen crashes are due to teen attitudes," Horowitz said. "Teens today are not the same as when I was that age."

Horowitz showed teachers how teen attitudes lead to bad decisions, such as drugs, alcohol and not wearing a seat belt, and how those decisions then lead to collisions.

"This is becoming a health crisis," Horowitz said. "We need to redefine driver education."

The program, which is administered through the Kansas Department of Education and funded by a grant from the Kansas Department of Transportation, is not required for Kansas driver education teachers but is offered as a profession development opportunity.

Chris Bortz of the Kansas Department of Transportation said the state chose to fund the **Drive** program because of its hands-on applications for teachers.

"The program is interactive and does a good job of trying to change the invincible attitude many teens

have," Bortz said. "It has seemed to be very well received and the grant has been extended to next year."

Teacher evaluations and follow-up will be used to determine the effectiveness of the program and future statistics show if teens have taken their knowledge to the roads, Bortz said.

Larry Murdock, a driver education teacher from Coffeyville High School, said Horowitz

seemed to hit the nail on the head during his presentation.

"Attitude is something we talk about a lot," Murdock said. "He did a very good job of expressing the reasons behind kids attitudes and then giving us appropriate solutions to the problem."

Many of the solutions Horowitz offered during his presentation could be easily applied in the driver education classrooms.

"There are definitely some things that I feel can be implemented into our existing curriculum," Murdock said.

Horowitz said the number one point he wanted to drive across to the teachers was the idea of ownership learning, which Horowitz said involves holding students responsible for learning and then applying what they know to daily situations.

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