Headline: Emphasize responsibility during teen safety week

Parents serve as role models to their children in a multitude of ways. The list is extensive and teaching proper driving habits should be near the top.

Driving could be considered a teen­ager’s initial step on the stairway to adulthood. It’s a responsibility to keep themselves and others among them from harm’s way.

It’s a skill that is honed, but never mastered. There is a threat of an acci­dent each time a driver gets behind the wheel. Those who embrace the respon­sibility proceed with caution and put themselves at lesser risk than those who fail to take the task seriously.

It’s not difficult to take driv­ing for granted and ignore safe hab­its. Defensive approaches should be stressed and accepted by teenagers.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) understands the concerns parents might have regarding their children’s driving rou­tines and has deemed October 15-21 National Teen Driver Safety Week.

The NHTSA advises parents to focus on alcohol consumption, inconsistent use of seat belts, distracted driving, speeding and driving with a passenger in the vehicle. Parents also should engage in safe-driving conversations year-round.

Impaired driving never should be tolerated. Teens are too young to pur­chase and consume alcohol, but that doesn’t stop them from getting into accidents.

But alcohol isn’t the only substance that impacts driving. Marijuana affects a driver’s ability to react. Teens should be reminded that driving under the influence of any impaired substance, including illicit or prescription drugs, could have deadly consequences.

Seat belts are a simple way to keep drivers and passengers safe, but too many don’t use them. NHTSA reports nearly 50% of teen passenger-vehicle drivers who die in car crashes are not wearing seat belts.

It’s never smart to be using cellphones, answering texts or browsing social-media sites while driving.

Speeding is another cause for teen drivers’ fatal-car crashes. Parents can’t stress enough the importance of driv­ing defensively.

Research, meanwhile, has proved that teen drivers transporting passen­gers can dramatically increase the risk of fatal-car crashes. The likelihood of drivers engaging in risky behavior tri­ples with multiple passengers.

Driving is a privilege. Teens strug­gling to obey the rules might need to have their licenses taken away until they understand the importance of safety.