



COMMUNITY VOICES



MOUNTAIN NEWS

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Back to the driving board: Time for traffic school

The late actor Dudley Moore once said: "The best car safety device is a rear-view mirror with a cop in it." Last week, editor Gord Bowes took us back to driver basics and drew attention to the fact that most drivers overlook the very basic rules of the road.

How about you? Is the only time you do 100 km/h in a 100 km/h zone when there is a police car nearby? Are you aware that the car on your right has the right-of-way at a four-way stop? Or when a vehicle merges on to the highway, do you change lanes or ease off the gas and allow the vehicle to collect speed and enter?

Maybe you knew at some point, but forgot. You may have heard the same thing I did from a nice lady at the motor vehicle department when I renewed my driver license a few years ago, "Here you go, sir, see you when you're 80." Holy cow, 80! That means that I, and every other driver in Ontario, will never need to look at a driver handbook or review driving skills and safety ever again. A frightening thought.

Receiving a traffic ticket may help grow the coffers of the City of Hamilton, but it doesn't make our roads any safer. We need a refresher - we need traffic school. The State of California, as well as many others in the United States, offers traffic school. Traffic school is an eight-hour program of instruction with a curriculum designed to educate a driver/traffic violator and a) reduce collision involvement, b) reduce traffic law violations and c) reemphasize responsibilities associated with operating a motor vehicle. One advantage to traffic school is not having to report your violation to your insurance company. Likewise,

you may have to pay your ticket, but will not lose valuable driving points. In California, you are allowed to attend traffic school once within an 18-month period.



LUCIO PALAZZO
COMMUNITY COLUMNIST

The curriculum for a California-based traffic school also includes such topics as recent changes and reasons for traffic laws, careless driving and its consequences, operator responsibilities, driving manoeuvres, defensive driving, collision avoidance, driver distractions, road rage/aggressive driving and avoiding it and more.

In addition to classroom instruction, you can also choose at-home study or online courses. Some states even offer comedy traffic school! A good option for sometimes, agreeably dry material. I attended one of these and learned a lot and laughed a lot.

Professional and career drivers such as chauffeurs are on the road all day and have mastered the rules and techniques of the road. Guy Giornofelice, owner/operator of A Happy Day Limousine in Hamilton, pays great attention to training his new drivers. Mr. Giornofelice tells his drivers, "Treat all drivers on the road like they're not good drivers."

As a career driver he experiences the lack of and dangerous habits of today's drivers everyday and remains on alert to keep his clients safe. Today's driver is presented with a number of dangerous distractions: changing CDs, fiddling with an MP3 player, fixing make-up, making and receiving phone calls and driving while "in-texticated" - a new term Mr. Giornofelice saw on a billboard on a Florida highway. Without a doubt, we need to head back to the driving board.

Lucio Palazzo is a Mountain resident.

Receiving a traffic ticket may help grow the coffers of the City of Hamilton, but it doesn't make our roads any safer

Road rules advice could lead to a pair of traffic tickets

re: Time for a road rules refresher (Editor's Notebook, May 17)

I have some comments on your column.

On your comment on merging onto a highway, I am afraid that I usually am what you call some idiot as I do not move over into the inside lane. I don't believe you have watched Canada's worst driver, as they had an episode on it dealing with this issue and the driver in what you call the merging lane is not required to move over into the next lane as it is the merging drivers responsibility to adjust their speed accordingly and not enter the lane at whatever speed

they want to. This is according to the panel of experts, which included retired OPP officer Cam Woolley.

As far as passing vehicles on the right side who are not going as fast as you want to go, it is an infraction of the Highway Traffic Act if you are doing more than the speed limit. When you do this you will get two tickets. You do seem to be promoting speeding as the fast lane speed is the posted speed and not whatever speed you think it should be.

Please feel free to check with the local authorities and if I am wrong then please let me know.

Barry Kelly
Hamilton

Drivers often err on multi-lane turns onto one-way streets

re: Time for a road rules refresher (Editor's Notebook, May 17)

As usual, I thoroughly enjoyed reading your Editor's Notebook column, especially the recent "rules of the road" one.

If I may, I'd like to add one that burns my butt: turning left or right on a red light where two, multi-lane one-way streets intersect one another, like Victoria Avenue at King or Main.

You are allowed to turn left or right on a red light from the curb lane only

— not from the second lane from the curb. I can't begin to tell you how many people I have observed doing this, including a police officer (who was in no hurry) that I was behind.

When drivers do this they block the curb lane vehicle's vision and can get caught in the middle of the road, partway around and unable to complete the turn.

Keep up the great work, especially you Bowes and arrows.

Bill Marsh
Hamilton Mountain

Outdoor smoke ban a good thing

re: Countdown is on to smoke-free outdoor recreation areas (May 17)

I would like to thank the City of Hamilton for creating the smoke-free outdoor recreation areas bylaw which takes effect May 31.

Thank you for choosing cleaner air and the health of Hamilton's residents and visitors over the harm

smoking and second-hand smoke causes to both smokers and non-smokers, especially young children.

As a family whose children play baseball, it is refreshing to realize this year as we cheer on our children we won't be getting our lungs full of smoke.

Debbie Thorkildsen
Hamilton Mountain

Help fight cystic fibrosis this Sunday

Residents of Hamilton are often asked to support a variety of worthy causes and fundraising initiatives. My family didn't choose which cause to support — it chose us.

At birth, my daughters were diagnosed with cystic fibrosis. This multi-system disease mainly affects the lungs and the digestive system, and is the most common fatal genetic disease affecting Canadian children and young adults. Each week in Canada, two children are diagnosed and one person dies from the disease. Currently, there is no cure.

As a member of our community, you can help breathe life into the

future of Canadians with cystic fibrosis, including my daughter's.

May is Cystic Fibrosis Awareness Month. I invite the residents of Hamilton to join my family for the Great Strides walk on Sunday, May 27, at 9 a.m. at Bayfront Park and to visit cysticfibrosis.ca/greatstrides to learn more about how you can register or sponsor walkers for the event.

Please join us in our fight for a cure for Canadians living with this deadly disease.

Tammy Strong
Hamilton Chapter volunteer
Cystic Fibrosis Canada, Hamilton Chapter

Submitting your letter to the NEWS



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