Mayo Clinic Health System offers Car Control Class to help teens be safer drivers

Mayo Clinic Health System has teamed up with Chippewa Valley Technical College to provide an educational driving class for teen drivers to teach them how to avoid accidents and become safer drivers.

The risk of motor vehicle crashes is higher among 16- to 19-year-olds than among any other age group. In fact, per mile driven, teen drivers ages 16 to 19 are four times more likely than older drivers to crash. The goal of Car Control Class is not to teach teens how to drive. Rather, trained professionals will coach teens on how to be safer drivers while having them experience driving situations that frequently cause panic and overcorrection resulting in accidents.

Parents accompany their teens during the class. Vicki Knutson of Eau Claire enrolled both of her sons in the class and says she feels more comfortable with them driving alone.

“I wanted Matthew (19) to take it to give him more confidence. He was too cautious behind the wheel,” Vicki says. “Timothy (17) was overconfident. I wanted him to have more instruction on how to be a safer driver.”

Matthew attended the October 2010 class and used his newly-acquired skills soon after when he skidded and fishtailed while turning a corner on the ice that winter. “I was able to keep the car fairly straight and recovered,” Matthew says. “I learned that in the Car Control Class. It has made me a more confident driver.”

Timothy was riding in the car with Matthew during the incident and was impressed by his brother’s ability to handle the car. He enrolled in the April 2011 class.

“The class definitely helped me with my driving,” Timothy says. “The day after I took the class, a truck pulled out in front of me, and I had to make a quick lane change. Had that happened before I took the class, I would not have known what to do. The class taught me what to do when there is not enough time to just stop.”

During the class, teens and their parents participate in classroom sessions and have an opportunity to drive through a specially designed road course. In the classroom, they are taught the physics and geometry of driving, how to eliminate distractions, how classroom instruction relates to the real world and how to avoid a crash before it ever happens.

Teens have the chance to feel how their cars respond during situations such as emergency and wet braking, bringing a car out of a skid, recovering when a tire goes off the road, shifting lanes to avoid an accident, side-to-side weight transfer and throttle steering.

Vicki says she would definitely recommend the Car Control Class to other parents of teen drivers.

“I loved it,” Vicki says. “It definitely prepares them for real-life driving conditions.”
Safe Mom Safe Baby: Surviving day by day

Safe Mom Safe Baby (SMSB) is a collaborative model for providing sensitive services to pregnant women who are experiencing intimate partner violence (IPV) and children. Its primary goal is to enhance the health and safety of abused women by helping them navigate through their prenatal experience within healthcare settings, as well as through the complexities of the criminal justice, legal, and social service systems within the community.

During the past five years, Tina Watts, RN, Case Manager for SMSB program at Aurora Sinai Medical Center, along with other providers, have improved the lives of nearly 500 pregnant women and new mothers who are at risk for, or living with, intimate partner violence. “This is a support program providing life skills training for those who are in desperate need,” said Tina, “as well as a tender hand-off to other community resource programs.

Courage is hard to find, especially for a person who is dealing with an abusive relationship. Briana (not her real name) is a 22-year-old Milwaukee woman who has two children and is uninsured, unemployed and pregnant. Before she was admitted into the Emergency Department (ED) at the Aurora Sinai Medical Center (ASMC) for severe abdominal bleeding, Briana had purchased three Greyhound bus tickets to Phoenix, Arizona to escape, with her children, from an abusive relationship and to seek temporary shelter with her aunt in Phoenix. No one knew of her plan to leave Milwaukee with the exception of her aunt.

Briana had walked several miles with her children to reach ASMC. She was met by Tina Watts, RN, Case Manager with the Safe Mom Safe Baby program. Tina noted, “Her pants were soaked with blood because of the bleeding and long walk.”

Of major concern to Briana was losing the tickets and the money she had spent to obtain them to gain access to another life, because the doctor required her to stay overnight to have the baby monitored. Tina continued:

“I was on the phone with the Greyhound representative, and they told me her tickets would only be good for 24 hours and if she did not show up, the tickets would expire.”

Tina assured Briana that the ED program would find a way to assist her with purchasing new tickets, because Briana’s health and her baby were the priority at the time.

“I called Briana’s aunt and made sure that she was going to be at the Greyhound bus station in Phoenix the next day to pick up Briana and her children when they arrived, because our program requires someone to be present during pick-up.”

Briana was discharged from ASMC the next day and agreed to bed rest once she arrived in Phoenix.

Aurora Sinai Medical Center, Milwaukee

Summer programs geared toward child safety

Each summer, Aspirus Wausau Hospital and Safe Kids Wausau Area host Splash Into Safety, a water safety program for children. During the program, kids between the ages of five and 14 learn about boating safety, life jacket safety, deep water safety, reach and throw assists, wading assists and hypothermia safety.

Children who participate in the program receive a free life jacket, and a free family swim follows the event.

This year, Aspirus and Safe Kids also partnered with the General Motors Foundation to provide education about the dangers of leaving children alone in cars in hot weather. The Never Leave Your Child Alone in a Car program unites coalition partners to share prevention tips with parents and caregivers to address the dangers to children in vehicles.

The program includes demonstrations at community events as well as tip sheets and posters that are handed out at child care centers, hospitals, police and fire stations.

Aspirus Wausau Hospital

Submit community benefit stories to Mary Kay Grasmick, editor, at mgrasmick@wha.org.

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)