



## Driving Our Future

**FORD TACKLES SAFETY CURRICULUM THROUGH DRIVING SKILLS FOR LIFE AND FORD FOCUS ON GIRLS' SAFETY EVENTS**

By Stephanie Jarnagan

Photos: Sam VarnHagen / Ford Motor Company Fund

Inexperience and distraction are the leading causes of auto crashes for teen drivers. To help combat these driving challenges, late last year the Ford Motor Company Fund brought two separate programs to the Metro Phoenix area—the hands-on Ford Driving Skills for Life (DSFL) training program and a new pilot event for younger girls dubbed “Ford Focus on Girls’ Safety.”

More than 1,000 teens and parents received hands-on teen driver training in Phoenix as part of the 2017 Ford DSFL program, which has trained more than 10,000 teens and parents in Arizona over the past decade.

Across the US, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death among teenagers. The award-winning Ford DSFL program helps new drivers stay safe behind the wheel by pairing newly licensed drivers with professional driving instructors, who focus on the issues and obstacles drivers face that cause crashes, including vehicle handling, hazard recognition, speed and space management, and distracted and impaired driving.

“We were pleased to be able to expand our efforts in 2017, to help reduce the number of crashes and fatalities through real-world training and teaching improved decision-making skills,” said Jim Graham, global manager, Ford Driving Skills for Life. “Partnering with our Arizona Ford dealers, the Arizona Governor’s Office of Highway Safety and local law enforcement, we believe we are making a substantial contribution to safer driving for local students and parents in the Phoenix metro area.”

Research conducted for the Ford DSFL program also shows that teens tend to follow in their parents’ footsteps when it comes to driving habits. Parents can help address the problem simply by setting a good example behind the wheel. This can include everything from not speeding or texting and buckling up, to teaching their children how to scan for potential hazards while driving.

Taylor Pennington completes the distracted driving course, which demonstrates to teens the dangers of texting while driving, using a coned course.

### Reaching pre-teen and teen girls and parents

Recognizing a need to expose teen girls to a number of personal and mobility safety issues, the Ford Motor Company Fund debuted the “Ford Focus on Girls’ Safety” event at Gilbert High School, prior to the Phoenix Ford DSFL events.

The free half-day event had girls ages 11 to 17 and their parents rotating through four sessions and learning key lessons about personal safety, basic vehicle maintenance, distracted driving and digital citizenship. A central part of the instruction focused on making better driving decisions by highlighting the dangers of impaired and distracted driving, which were demonstrated via a hands-on drivable course (for licensed or permitted drivers) and through Ford’s impaired driving suits, which allowed girls to experience what using drugs or alcohol does to your vision.

“The distracted driving session was eye opening, because you could actually see how many cones were run over while the drivers tried to text a message,” said Lexi Woolsey, a 14-year-old Gilbert resident who attends Payne Junior High. “Those drivers actually look a lot like drunk drivers on the road, because they can’t stay in their lanes and aren’t paying attention.”

Girls also learned about safety when using ride-sharing and ride-hailing services, and practiced going “Chihuahua crazy” in a personal safety session led by retired DPS officer and Gilbert resident Laurie Latham of AZPlayItSafeDefense. She taught the girls to be vocal and use their most powerful weapon—their legs—to kick at an assailant. Retired police officer Frank Griffiths also spoke to the girls about the dangers of social media, while parents learned about the effects of social media on teenage brains with Katey McPherson, executive director of The Gurian Institute.

San Tan Ford’s service team taught girls and their parents basic maintenance skills like how to check fluid levels in their vehicle, jump a car battery using new jump starters that do not require another car to be hooked up, change a dirty air fil-



ter, check tire tread wear and more.

A highlight of the event was a keynote by six-time Olympic gold medal swimmer Amy Van Dyken-Rouen, who shared her personal story of resiliency. As a child, she had severe asthma and couldn’t even swim a full lap across the pool until she was 11. She won six gold medals over two Olympics, and she passed around all six of those

### SAVE THE DATE:

**Ford Driving Skills For Life is slated to return to Phoenix Nov. 8-12, 2018.**

**For online curriculum, or to sign up to be on the information list and be the first notified when registration opens for future sessions in Arizona, visit [www.DrivingSkillsforLife.com](http://www.DrivingSkillsforLife.com).**

medals for the audience to touch. On June 6, 2014, she was involved in an ATV accident that severed her spinal cord, leaving her paralyzed from the waist down.

“Amy has spent her entire life overcoming the odds, and we couldn’t have asked for a better role model to speak to these young girls,” said Yisel Cabrera, community relations manager at the Ford Motor Company Fund. “We hope this inaugural event equipped the girls with valuable life lessons that pertain to mobility and personal safety, especially as they approach driving age.” ■



(At right, top to bottom) High school students complete the vehicle handling course while driving Ford Mustangs—a highlight of Ford DSFL.

Keith Johnson, a student at the East Valley Institute of Technology, attempts to walk a straight line with officers while in Ford’s impairment suit, which simulates drunk driving.

The speed and space management course at Ford DSFL includes abrupt stops and lane changes.

Impairment goggles are given to teens to simulate drunk or drugged driving.

Julie Drake, 16, Liberty High (driver) and Grace Camblin, 15, Mountain Pointe (back seat) completed the impaired driving course using virtual reality goggles that simulate drunk driving.

