Effectively Engaging Teens to Promote Traffic Safety

U Got Brains Champion Schools Program: Teens Teaching Teens in NJ

Wendy Berk
Brain Injury Alliance of New Jersey
New Jersey 2006:

- 6 out of 100 teens involved in a crash
- Teen driving crash every 9 minutes
- 48 teen drivers and 19 passengers died (6%↑ from 2005)

Result: 2007– NJ Teen Driver Study Commission Created
How did BIANJ Get Involved?

- Car crashes are #1 cause of BI in teens
- Existing prevention programs were not resonating with teens
- Teen Focus Groups
- NJDHTS Funding
- Private support
About the U Got Brains Champion Schools Program

- Peer to peer
- Faculty Advisor
- Runs from September–May
- Cash stipend provided
- Midterm/final reports
- Awards Showcase
- Evaluation
By the Numbers:

- **Started in 2010**
  - 19 schools
  - 14 counties
  - Approximately 25,000 students

- **2018–19**
  - 62 schools
  - 17 counties
  - Approximately 78,000 students

- **Program Totals**
  - 143 schools
  - 21 counties (statewide)
  - Approximately 550,000 students

We Need Your Help!
Student Projects

Our guests were so inspiring!
Mr. Gabe Hurley shared his touching story and taught our school the importance of being...
Judging

- Each project is judged by a panel of experts in transportation field
- Measured on 10 criteria ranging from impact, thoroughness, execution, use of media, etc.
- Grand Prize winners receive a driving simulator for their school
Findings:

- Teens reported engaging in safer driving behaviors
- Peers engaged in safer driving behaviors
- Social pressure from friends to ride & drive safely
- More positive driving safety culture at school
BIANJ Annual Evaluation 2017–18 Student Survey Results

Students Report: (284 responses)

- 85% agree or strongly agree that they are safer drivers
- 86% think they are safer passengers
- 97% think the program offers the opportunity to talk about safe driving in their schools and promote safe driving practices
Impact on Student Driving Behaviors:

◦ **Always Drive Focused:**
  - Before-39%  After-67%
  - 28%

◦ **Never Speed:**
  - Before-32%  After-48%
  - 16%

◦ **Always Follow NJ Laws for New Drivers:**
  - Before-51%  After-74%
  - 23%

◦ **Always Wear Seat Belts (drivers):**
  - Before-65%  After-80%
  - 15%

◦ **Always Wear Seat Belts (passengers):**
  - Before-52%  After-74%
  - 22%
When we first started this program 3 years ago the seatbelt use among student drivers was very low, around 60%. This year we had 98% seat belt compliance!
“We helped with the Walking School Bus in the elementary schools. This was a great advantage because the younger kids are starting to find out about the program.”

“Students found their voices to become advocates for promoting an issue so important to their lives.”
March 2008– NJTDSC recommendations released

May 2010– GDL laws strengthened

September 2010– UGB Champion Schools program introduced

January 2011– NJTSDC formed
NJ Teen Crash Fatalities—Drivers

Deceased Teen Drivers (ages 16-20) - Totals


0 10 20 30 40
Where Are We Now?

- 2019–20 is 10 Year Anniversary of Program
- Statewide Network of Schools
- Student Ambassadors
- Culture of Driving Safety within Schools
- Alumni of Program Continue Advocacy
“I believe that peer to peer teaching and involvement is the best way to promote teen safety driver awareness. Having a friend or fellow student promoting a cause will have more of an impact on teens than a teacher/administrator”.

2017–18 Faculty Advisor
Thank you!

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