

EXPRESSWAYS

VIDEO TRANSCRIPT • Winter 2012

Courtney Heidelberg: Welcome! The Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles is always looking for new and innovative ways to do business and that's why Expressways will now be in an online broadcast format.

We hope you enjoy it.

To start the inaugural online broadcast....we begin with the award winning Emergency Contact Information System.

ECI has been available in Florida for years now. We continue to see the number of registrants grow every day.

Here is a story of why we believe in this system.

Nick Johnson: "We were just trying to find something to do. We didn't have anything better. We decided to go fishing, go riding around in the woods. We did it all that night. And then we came back and it happened. We were probably 15 minutes from this house."

Narrator: Even though it sounds like a normal evening of fun and relaxation, 19-year-old, Nick Johnson, is talking about the hours and moments before he almost died.

Nick: "I was in the hospital. I woke up, and everybody told me what was going on and what had happened. I just knew the extent of my injuries."

Narrator: Nick was driving on this highway on a winter morning not too far from his East Palatka home, with his cousin as a passenger, when he crashed. The truck he was driving went into this tree line. Nick was ejected from the cabin and his cousin, partially ejected. Looking at these images, it's hard to believe the two young men survived.

The first responders admit, they didn't think Nick was going to make it.

Jeanne Johnson: "It was horrible. I got the call, and thank goodness. It was bad, but it wasn't as bad as they said it was."

Narrator: Jeanne Johnson, Nick's mother, said it was one of the worst moments of her life.

Jeanne: "He had said he was on the way home a little before 5:00. About 5:50 the phone rang and it was dispatch from Highway Patrol in Jacksonville, and she told me he'd been involved in a crash and was being life-flighted to Jacksonville."

Narrator: Jeanne said she woke her husband and they were on the road immediately to go see their son as he fought for his life in a Jacksonville hospital less than an hour away.

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First responders were able to call Jeanne within minutes of the crash.....and not because East Palatka is a small, tight knit community.

Jeanne: "They wouldn't have known. The trooper didn't know who he was. The paramedics didn't know who he was, and that had to be the only way they would know to call me."

Narrator: How did troopers know to call the Johnsons? Two years before the crash, when Nick got his driver's license, Jeanne went to this website, and clicked on the Emergency Contact Information system icon.

Jeanne says it took her less than one minute to register Nick's emergency contact information into the ECI system. She says those few seconds gave her valuable time on a day she needed it more than ever.

Jeanne: "I was just glad I could find out as soon as I did so that we could get everybody to start praying, and I think that's what worked."

Nick: "Oh, I push all my friends to do it. It first came out when my sister got her license, and she's two years older than me, and then she put it on mine. We never had to use it until that day... They had a benefit for me, and they had the bus out there and all my friends. I pushed them all and made them get it because it saves lives."

Jeanne: "Please, when your children get their license, exercise this option. You can put three names and three phone numbers. Do it."

Narrator: She has one more thought.

Jeanne: "I think it is the greatest thing the state of Florida has ever done."

Narrator: Now, Jeanne and Nick no longer take simple everyday things for granted. That's because they both know how quickly it can all be taken away.

Nick: "Oh yeah, and everybody else. I've been told plenty of times."

Jeanne: "Number one, its simple. Number two, you don't have to wonder. You get a call within a few minutes. You know if you need to be concerned, if you need to get up and go to where your child. You know immediately. You don't have to wait and wonder why your child hasn't come home."

Courtney: Governor Rick Scott signed House Bill 1165 to recognize and honor Florida veterans who have honorably served their nation, by adding a veteran designation to their driver license or ID card.

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At a news conference, hosted at DHSMV's Tallahassee headquarters, Lt. Gov. Jennifer Carroll said the new feature on the driver license is just one way that the state can show appreciation to military veterans. The Lt. Governor and Gov. Rick Scott are both Navy veterans.

Lt. Governor Jennifer Carroll: "So this goes a long ways in not only proving that you're a veteran to receive the benefits that are rightly owed to you with the federal government, but certainly for benefits that we provide at the state level."

Courtney: To add the "V" for veteran to a license or ID, veterans can visit any Florida driver license office, to include those operated by county tax collectors.

Veterans should come prepared by bringing a copy of their DD- 214 and other documents required, which you can find at GatherGoGet.com. There is a one-time, \$1 fee, in addition to the replacement or renewal fee.

Julie Jones, Executive Director, DHSMV: "The Department is very honored to be able to serve our military veterans in this manner."

Courtney: Breaking a glass ceiling....it's an achievement for any person brave enough to reach for the stars.

For the first time in the history of the Florida Highway Patrol, a female officer was promoted to the rank of Lt. Colonel and the Patrol's No. 2 post as deputy director. Lt. Col. Kelly Hildreth, is a 16-year FHP veteran, mother of two, and University of Central Florida graduate with a degree in criminal justice.

Lt. Col. Kelly Hildreth, Florida Highway Patrol: "My family they've taught me over the years to do the right thing, to serve others before you serve yourself. I live by those principles and will continue to live by those principles."

Courtney: Hildreth, introduced at a Sept.16 ceremony by FHP Director Col. David Brierton, was chosen from a nationwide pool of more than 50 applicants.

Col. David Brierton, Director, Florida Highway Patrol: "Kelly stood out amongst all of them, and she did an excellent job. I have had the opportunity to work with her over the years, from south Florida to Tallahassee, and she has always been a very dedicated and committed leader, and she is very progressive in the way she does her work."

Lt. Col. Kelly Hildreth: "It's been a pleasure to work with Colonel Brierton and Executive Director Jones, and I thank them and all the members of the Highway Patrol for all of their support over the years they've given, and I look forward to working with everyone."

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Courtney: Hildreth's children and her twin brother, Kevin, who also is a Florida trooper, joined her for the ceremony.

Perhaps you've never had a chance to see FHP's special, furiest troopers in action! If not, here's your chance.....

The Criminal Interdiction Unit consists of specially trained troopers designated as felony officers and canine handlers. These troopers are strategically assigned throughout the state to patrol the interstate system and other highways in order to interdict drug couriers and other criminal activity. If you ask any of these troopers what their best tool is, they'll agree, their canine partners.

At headquarters, these amazing and well-trained K-9s were caught in action following their graduation ceremony!

Florida aims to "White Out" teen crashes! Again DHSMV organized the statewide event to promote safe teen drivers and habits.

Traffic crashes are the #1 killer of teens in Florida and in the United States. To keep more teens safe in the driver and passenger seats, the Department partnered with five Florida high schools throughout the state to host White Out events.

The Department asked teens, parents, school employees and other safety partners around the state to participate by wearing a white shirt Oct. 18 to help white out teen crashes. DHSMV promoted the White Out in conjunction with National Teen Driver Safety Week, and used the opportunity to educate teens and their parents about staying safe behind the wheel.

Stephon McIrvn, Amos P. Godby High School Student Body President: "This is a big deal. You have to learn how to drive safely and with caution because not only will your life be at risk, but others as well. My mother often tells me that you're not driving for yourself, you have to drive for others. You never know what's out there, so you always have to be aware of your surroundings."

Courtney: Teens have the highest crash rate of any age group in Florida, where we have more than 737,000 licensed teen drivers. Nearly 20,000 were injured in 2010, and 144 were killed.

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As the number of fatalities related to drinking and drugged driving decreases, DHSMV and safety partners want to keep the downward trend heading in the right direction. Alcohol and drugs factored into nearly 19,000 crashes in 2010, leading to more than 13,000 injuries.

Governor Scott proclaimed December as National Drunk and Drugged Driving - or 3D - Prevention Month to promote safe driving throughout the holiday season. To combat impaired driving, DHSMV has teamed up with the Governor's Office, local law enforcement agencies and safety advocates December 2 to remind drivers that there are consequences of impaired driving.

Gov. Rick Scott: "I ask all Floridians and visitors to be responsible on our roads. Make wise decisions about driving. The cost of doing otherwise can absolutely be heartbreaking."

Col. David Brierton, Director, Florida Highway Patrol: "During this holiday season, law enforcement officers statewide will once again be participating in strategic education and enforcement campaigns such as Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over. The goal is to create the safest possible driving environment by modifying driver behavior and educating drivers to make better decisions."

Courtney: You fight to keep your eyes open, your head up, but caffeine, chewing gum and loud music just aren't enough to keep Mr. Sandman away. The problem is you're behind the wheel of a car. Ann Howard has this report about drowsy driving and statewide effort to prevent it with the full support of one north Florida family.

Ann Howard: On Sept. 1, the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles along with the Florida Department of Transportation held a press conference along with safety advocates and lawmakers to announce Drowsy Driving Prevention Week, which runs Sept. 5 through the 9 of this year (2010).

State Rep. Alan Williams, District 8, sponsored the legislation that created the Ronshay Dugans Act in 2010, which designates the first week of September as Drowsy Driving Prevention Week.

Rep. Alan Williams: "Today is just another way to remember Ronshay but also to hopefully have her spirit show that we are not going to lose any more young girls, young boys, grown men, grown women to drowsy drivers on the highway."

Ann: Ronshay's family was in attendance at the press conference...

Ms. Josie West, aunt of Ronshay Dugans: "It reminds me that Ronshay's name is not gone in vain; a death is not in vain. It also helps to comfort me that others are listening, they are not driving drowsy, they are remembering Ronshay through this. Driving drowsy is a big issue now. A lot of crashes are happening now. People are not utilizing the rest stops. That is why we chose the rest area (for the press conference) to encourage people to pull over if you are tired."

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Ann: Regardless of a driver's vocation, age, sex, health condition or other characteristics, any driver can become over confident and fall victim to drowsy driving.

Dr. Gregory Holt, Director, Tallahassee Sleep Diagnostic Center: "And that's one of the problems with driving drowsy. People aren't aware that a sleep debt is being accumulated. They will try to increase their sleep on the weekends but as little as two hours of sleep loss a night for a week will result in a 50 percent loss of vigilance. That is pretty astounding. Another sleep study has reported up to 70 percent of people have driven drowsy before. An upwards of 20 to 25 percent of people have actually documented falling asleep behind the wheel."

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that each year driver fatigue results in 100,000 police-reported crashes, 1,550 deaths, 71,000 injuries and \$12.5 billion in monetary losses. So, please, make sure you're well rested before you travel.

Courtney: And this wraps up our very first DHSMV Expressways broadcast.

We hope you enjoyed it.