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Improving safety can help put the brakes on fatalities

Thousands of teens die in car crashes every year in the U.S. NHRA drag race legend Doug Herbert knows this all too well.

“This statistic became a reality for me in January of 2008 when my two boys, Jon and James, ages 17 and 12, were killed in a car crash,” Herbert said.

Thunder Ridge High School teacher Denise Miller experienced a similar tragedy when she lost her daughter in 2015.

“Nothing prepares you for standing at the edge of a field, held back by rescue workers, as you scream, cry, react,” Miller said. “That realization that comes over you when you comprehend they are doing nothing to free your precious baby from her vehicle. Because there is nothing that can be done. It’s already too late.”

Herbert and Miller were joined by Transportation Secretary Richard Carlson, Kansas Highway Patrol Officer Don Hughes and recent Kansas State University graduate Logan O’Dea at the annual Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day news conference at the Capitol today. The campaign strives to decrease traffic fatalities.

Students from Topeka and surrounding areas, as well as other transportation safety partners and law enforcement officials, attended the event.

Logan O’Dea of Topeka shared how important wearing his seat belt was when driving while it was raining and he hit standing water.

“I was wearing my seat belt. If I hadn’t been, my body would have been with the back-window glass they found flung 50 feet away from the car,” he said.

Unfortunately, that isn’t always the case. Last year, 429 people were killed in traffic crashes across Kansas, and 76 of them were teenagers.

Organizations that work together on the annual safety campaign with KDOT include the Kansas Turnpike Authority, Kansas Highway Patrol, AAA of Kansas, Kansas Contractors Association, Kansas Family Partnership, Kansas Traffic Safety Resource Office, Federal Highway Administration and the Kansas Society of Professional Engineers.

For more information on Put the Brakes on Fatalities Day, visit the [KDOT website](#).

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