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Students learn 'zone' safety

By Eric Miller
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Representatives of the Tennessee Department of Transportation are going to Robertson County high schools to teach students about the dangers of driving in work zones.

On Friday, April 27, the Tennessee Department of Transportation's Get in the Zone program visited Greenbrier High School.

"It's a driver awareness program," Jim Williams, operations specialist supervisor for TDOT, said. "Our primary purpose here is to make them aware that, when they are in a construction zone, they need to recognize that they are in the zone and proceed safely through it to protect themselves and the highway workers."

Get in the Zone is a "work zone safety education program ... geared toward high school students who are just learning or thinking about learning to drive," according to the TDOT Web site.

Students are shown a presentation that includes speakers from TDOT and related law enforcement agencies, a PowerPoint presentation that shows road signs one would find in a construction zone, hands-on visual aids and videos on the importance of driving without distraction.

Lt. Christina Faulkner, a state trooper for 23 years, is using her experience to inform students of how to drive in construction zones.

"If we can stop one death, the program is a success," Faulkner said.

In addition to informing students of how to properly drive in a construction zone, Faulkner also informs students driving laws that affect high school-aged drivers.

"If you're under 18, it's illegal to use the cell phone while driving," Faulkner said, adding that the law had passed just this year.

Tennessee's interstate system is 50 years old, according to Williams.

"Anywhere a student drives, they have opportunities to drive into construction," Williams said.

“It helped me learn a lot,” Matt Boshers, ninth-grader at GHS said. “When I start driving, it will help me pay attention.”

“When I start driving, I’ll be more conscious of what’s around me,” Megan Lewis, 10th-grader at GHS, said.

The Get in the Zone presentation will be held at Springfield High School on Friday. The program will be at White House Heritage, East Robertson and Jo Byrns high schools next week.

“We’re going to all the other county schools before the end of the year,” Williams said.