

## IS YOUR TEEN SAFE BEHIND THE WHEEL?

I now have two more grandchildren entering the world of driving on the arteries of our state and nation. Are they safe? What are the risks? How can we mitigate the risks?

During 2015, NH teen drivers comprised 2% of all NH drivers, but were involved in more than 16% of NH car crashes. It is safe to infer that "inexperience" behind the wheel was a significant contributor to their car crashes.

According to the Center for Disease Control the leading cause of death for children, teens, and young adults is motor vehicle accidents. It is estimated that NH traffic accidents costs total \$143 million. NH State Police report that about 75% of all traffic accident fatalities are associated with impaired driving, distracted driving, speeding and the failure to use seatbelts. As an aside, I reflect on the recent behavior of some students at our nation's universities who simply threw aside common sense behavior guidelines in this pandemic, and as a result the schools shut down. Those of us who have gone through adolescence have hopefully gained insight on 'risky' choices and the potential effect our choices have over time. Yes, the adolescent has unique decision making skills, but as Hartley and Somerville point out "the late development of the prefrontal cortex, .... could constrain the utilization of such strategic aspects of decision-making in adolescence." Inside your adolescent's brain the prefrontal cortex (which controls behavior and decision making) is not yet fully operational, while the limbic system which controls fear and pleasure is about as active as it will ever be! The adolescent does not 'think' before they 'act' because their brain is not yet 'wired' to do that.

So how should we prepare our youth to take the wheel and be a safe driver? There are many groups devoted to providing programs for helping adolescents become and remain safe drivers. I would encourage parents and their teens to look into programs such as: The Injury Prevention Center at CHaD. As important as these programs are, I firmly believe that it is the parent's responsibility and privilege to help their children through these tumultuous years. It is almost a given that your adolescent will seek risky behaviors. Encourage them to engage in 'safe' risky behaviors like athletic competition. I remember a grandson with his snowboard standing on top of a rocky embankment off of the trail and wanting me to join him. "No", I said, "my prefrontal cortex is working, and what you are about to do is very risky, so be aware that there will be a consequence as you come off that rock!" That is what we call 'a controlled learning experience!' Parents also have the great privilege of discussing 'risky behaviors' with their children. Carefully, and with sensitivity, discuss the risks of alcohol, drugs, vaping, smoking, sexual behaviors, and yes driving.

While driving with my grandson, I attempted to illustrate that the consequences of risky behavior may not be apparent right away, but will show up in time. I showed him that turning the wheel ever so slightly does not immediately create a problem, but over time, that slight turn of the wheel will cause us to hit a tree or another vehicle. As my pickup truck was headed for the ditch, he was able to experience the truth that a little risk over time can have a very poor outcome! That, I explained is what can happen with risky behavior with drugs, alcohol, sex and smoking (to just name a few). So take the initiative and start preparing your adolescent for life and driving.

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Kathleen and Bill Ames of Bow were recognized by the Concord Regional VNA for their commitment to the community. Kathleen Ames joined the Concord Regional VNA Board of Trustees in 2003 serving 12 years, including two years as chairwoman. She participates in Parent-Friend celebrations, Passion for Caring and Hospice Lights of Life.

Her leadership, commitment and guidance continues to support the growth of Concord Regional VNA's service, including the Telehealth/Health Buddy, Physician Portal, evidence-based, nationally recognized programs and the community health educator program.

Bill Ames, an active supporter of Concord Regional VNA, began volunteering in 2018. He has provided patient companionship and caregiver respite, has served as a pet escort with the organization's therapy dog teams and has delivered dozens of lights to businesses as part of the annual Hospice Lights of Life campaign.

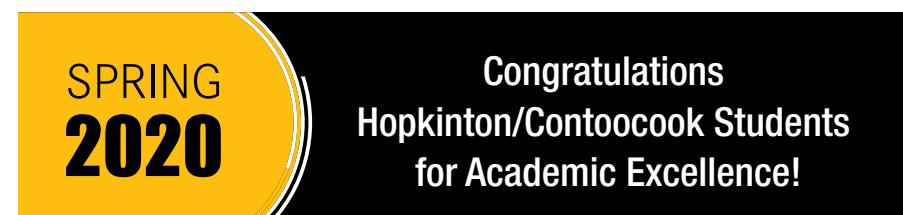
In 2019, Bill began serving as the "Veteran Volunteer Captain." Acting as captain, he assists the volunteer coordinator with recruiting and training new volunteers, and works with veteran service organizations to educate members about the needs of veterans at end-of-life.



The Plymouth State University (PSU) Alumni Association recently announced its 2020 Alumni Award recipients. Six alumni and one staff member were recognized for their commitment to serving PSU, their professions and their communities.

"Plymouth State University is extremely fortunate to have such exceptional, dedicated and caring alumni," said Donald L. Birx, Ph.D., President, Plymouth State University. "Their continued service to the University helps to set us apart from other educational institutions and inspires current students to consider how they can contribute to the PSU community – both while they're on campus and when they graduate."

**OUTSTANDING GRADUATE ALUMNI AWARD:** Charles Lloyd, Ed.D. of Bow, graduate Class of 2007, and 2011 recipient of a certificate of advanced graduate studies, was honored for his leadership in education, working to transform the community college experience for students across the state of New Hampshire. Lloyd began his career at New Hampshire Technical Institute working in student life, teaching businesses and leadership classes, and coaching men's basketball, and currently serves as President of White Mountain Community College. "His passion and dedication to helping students achieve their goals through higher education has continued to grow over the years," said Birx.



**CAITIE MCGLASHAN**, a sophomore majoring in neuroscience was named to the dean's list for the spring semester at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine.

**CONNOR MERCHANT**, a computer networking and cybersecurity major, was named to the dean's list for the spring semester at Champlain College in Burlington, VT.

**LILLIAN PRICE** was named to the dean's list for the spring semester at Colby-Sawyer College in New London.

**EMILY A. THUNBERG** graduated magna cum laude with a bachelor's degree in biomedical engineering from Boston University. Thunberg was also named to the dean's list for the spring semester.

**MARY TRAFTON**, a freshman, was named to the dean's list for the spring semester at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine.