



Organize to Cut Residential Speeding

The author is former executive director of the National Safety Council's Air Bag & Seat Belt Safety Campaign. Her commitment to helping protect children through prevention stems from her training as an occupational therapist. Dewey-Kollen, a certified child passenger safety technician, has an 11-year-old son who always rides buckled-up in a rear seat.

by Janet Dewey-Kollen

It's back-to-school time — time to slow down and watch out for kids. Concern about excessive speed in residential areas is one of the most frequent complaints that police and city officials face, regardless of the time of year.

Almost one-fourth of all children between the ages of 5 and 9 who were killed in traffic crashes were pedestrians, according to National Highway Traffic Safety Administration crash statistics for 2000. Pedestrians 70 and older accounted for 17 percent of all pedestrian fatalities and 6 percent of all pedestrians injured.

Pedestrian fatalities have decreased more than any other category of motor vehicle deaths since 1995, yet they still account for about 11 percent of all traffic deaths, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. NHTSA statistics show that in 2000, 4,700 pedestrians were killed in traffic crashes in the United States and 78,000 pedestrians were injured, that's one every seven minutes. Most of these fatalities occurred in urban areas — 71 percent — and at non-intersection locations — 78 percent.

Transportation planners rely on the three E's — Engineering, Enforcement and Education — to mitigate roadway problems. Engineering efforts include additional stop signs, rumble strips, lateral curb extensions and traffic circles. Since traffic on residential streets typically is sporadic, with most traffic occurring during morning and evening peak periods, installation of stop signs is often not

warranted. Significant backlash to speed bumps and other traffic calming measures from the public and from emergency responders, has resulted in some traffic engineers considering these measures too drastic for most residential speed situations.

Residents Are the Speeding Culprits

Enforcement efforts such as speed monitoring trailers and increased citations are obvious deterrents to speeders, but are heavily dependent on available manpower and equipment. While educational efforts can range from catchy marketing campaigns to somewhat confrontational approaches by neighborhood groups to record speeders in the act on video, a decidedly different approach is gaining momentum that is based on the recognition that more than half of all residential zone speeders actually are residents of the neighborhood.

Developed in 1998 by Tom Everson of Omaha, Neb., the *Keep Kids Alive Drive 25*, or KKAD25, initiative is designed to mobilize residents to take responsibility for their driving behavior through grassroots efforts and by posting and observing yard signs placed in their neighborhood. "Efforts to change neighborhood driving behavior must ultimately target drivers in their own neighborhoods. I call the program a human solution vs. a structural solution," said Everson.

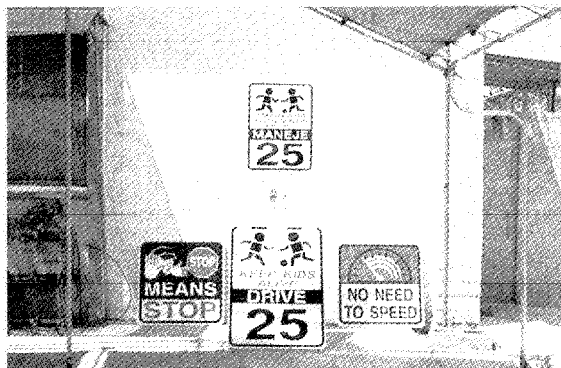
According to a 1999 national survey about speeding sponsored by NHTSA and conducted by Schulman, Ronca & Bucuvalas Inc, a global market and opinion research firm, "About two-thirds of all drivers report they at least occasionally exceed what *they consider to be the maximum safe speed* on roads they regularly travel." Reports from police officers around the country also indicate that citation and crash reports show some 60-75 percent of speeders actually live in the neighborhood in which they are cited.

"It's not that people don't care, they simply are not thinking about how fast they are driving, explained John Amberson, a transportation planner in Oceanside, Calif. "It takes a conscious effort to drive 25 mph on residential streets."

In Amberson's experience, traffic-engineering measures are not appropriate for 98 percent of the requests his office receives about neighborhood speeding.

Yard Signs and Decals Make a Difference

City officials in Oceanside, a community of 160,000 located 35 miles north of San Diego, became convinced of the value of the KKAD25 initiative in June 2000, after a community pilot program showed a 16 percent reduction in speeding on



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neighborhood streets where the *Keep Kids Alive Drive 25* signage was posted.

Annually, Oceanside purchases 125 of the inexpensive KKAD25 yard signs, available in both English and Spanish, and offers the signs to resident groups for use on a two- to three-week basis. Speed radar trailers and enforcement support often are used in combination with the awareness program. Amberson notes that he continues to see speed reductions as a result of the yard signs efforts, particularly in school zones and on residential streets with young families. "From the city's perspective, another benefit of the program is that unlike engineering solutions, now we always have something to offer citizens who want to take proactive steps to reduce speeding in their neighborhood," Amberson said.

Officer Michael Stevenson of Oro Valley, Ariz., also said he believes this education and grassroots approach is a valuable way to respond to residential speeding complaints. Stevenson, who works for the Special Operations and Traffic Unit of the Oro Valley Police Department, came up with a clever and unique approach to using the *Keep Kids Alive Drive 25* message. With an initial grant of \$2,200 from the local power company, Stevenson worked with three local waste collection companies to place 9" x 12" KKAD25 decal on residential refuse containers.

Pre- and post-testing in an Oro Valley neighborhood of 1,000 homes showed 85 percent of motorists on test roadways reduced their speed from 29 mph to less than 25 mph. "Every time the containers are placed curbside, the KKAD25 message reminds drivers to slow down," Stevenson said. Because of the positive response, the program now is financed by the city and has been expanded from a neighborhood traffic safety program to a citywide effort.

Residents Take Control

Everson said the response of these two communities is typical of the feedback he hears from programs across the country. "Police agencies tell me that one of the greatest benefits of the *Keep Kids Alive Drive 25* initiative is improved police-resident relationships. Residents no longer blame police for not being present to catch speeders, but they and other drivers check their speedometer and slow down when they see the yard sign messages."

Police-coordinated initiatives make up about 20 percent of KKAD25 programs currently in place in the United States. The majority of initiatives begin at the neighborhood level. Gary Greer of Phoenix has experienced a tremendous response to his KKAD25 neighborhood effort, and now is working toward a citywide initiative. Greer, a retired police officer, was asked in 1998 to help a group of 21 "block watchers" in his area coordinate their approach to resident concerns about speeding. With money from a city-administered federal 301c grant for neighborhood services and safety, the group identified the *Keep Kids Alive Drive 25* program as an affordable way to curb neighborhood speeding in the one square-mile association area.

How to Mobilize a *Keep Kids Alive Drive 25* Initiative

1. Identify a coordinating organization.
2. Introduce the campaign through presentations to neighborhood groups, stressing partnerships between the community, law enforcement and city, as appropriate.
3. Canvas the neighborhood distributing information and talking with residents about the campaign, and inviting personal commitment.
4. Work with law enforcement and traffic engineering agencies to provide pre/post speed studies.
5. Post *Keep Kids Alive Drive 25* yard signs and/or decals throughout neighborhoods as a reminder for drivers to check their speed and slow down.
6. Evaluate the results.

Source: www.KeepKidsAlive.com

Greer's neighborhood association faced two particular challenges: a lack of posted speed limit signs on 15 of 20 streets in the initiative area, and "cut-through drivers."

"City regulations do not require the posting of speed limit signs on many short streets, so people are left to think back to their driver's license test and remember that 25 mph is the national standard for speed on non-posted streets," Greer said. Even though the KKAD25 signs are not regulatory traffic control devices, Greer said he believes signs serve as an important reminder of the residential speed limit.

Those who cut through neighborhoods to save time and avoid traffic lights were another problem. "These drivers aren't thinking about driving slowly to protect kids," said Greer, who routinely sees drivers traveling at speeds of 68 mph in 30 mph speed zones. He credits KKAD25 yard and street signs with reducing speeds of these drivers by 20 mph.

KKAD25 initiatives around the country, now in 159 communities in 36 states, are encouraged to share ideas and communicate with each other via formal and informal networks. "It is vitally important that neighborhood groups work closely with city officials, schools, and local businesses to plan and implement *Keep Kids Alive Drive 25* campaigns," Everson said. "Potential problems, such as yard signs placed on public right of ways, can easily be avoided so resident efforts honor the public good and set the stage for successful, effective implementation."

For Everson, the response to his idea has been extremely gratifying. "We all move at very high speeds today — literally in our cars and figuratively in the business of everyday life," he said. "When individually we commit to slowing down and working together to remind others to drive more slowly, we all benefit — especially our children."