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York police battling bad driving with pamphlets

BY GIANNI COLAVECCHIA
Staff Writer

York Region Police hope a pamphlet can help combat bad driving, but Sara Liu isn't so sure.

"I don't know if it is enough to change that," she said. "I know it's a reminder and sometimes that's important."

With two children in her 1996 Jeep Cherokee, the 32-year-old Maple resident was one of many drivers pulled over in the "Save a Life" campaign — a project aimed at speeding and the improper use of children's car seats.

Liu, who received a pamphlet about proper restraints for children, was stopped in front of Maple's Michael Cranny Elementary School Tuesday to show how the campaign will work.

Police plan to conduct what they call a "progressive" program at five major intersections in York Region this month.

Transportation department employees will use radar in its first stage, checking speeds clocked on various roads. In the second stage, police and public health officials will hand out thousands of pamphlets to tell drivers the consequences of speeding and improper

seatbelt use.

York Regional Police, one of a dozen Toronto-area forces involved with the campaign, are to step up patrols in the third stage.

Whether the campaign changes driving habits remains to be seen.

From 11:15 to 11:45 a.m. at the school, several drivers cruised through an intersection guarded by a stop sign and several television cameras.

"Right through," one officer said, shaking his head at one of the inattentive motorists.

Another driver earned a summons to appear in court for racing nearly 80 km-h in the school's safety zone.

And a woman clocked going more than 50 km-h offered little response to a sergeant's explanations as to why she should slow down.

"I don't want to be part of this media thing," she said in declining an interview, driving off in her Dodge Caravan.

Will a pamphlet change the behaviour of such a driver?

"I think it's going to make them think," Supt. George Kydd said. "We've received nothing but positive responses."

Kydd stopped short of saying there will be zero tolerance for speeding in the program's third stage, adding York police want to "be seen for strict and fair

enforcement".

Zoran Postic, an employee with the region's transportation department, predicted the program will complement initiatives such as OPP blitzes on 400-series highways.

Another driver earned a summons to appear in court for racing nearly 80 km-h in the school's safety zone.

"We realize that traffic safety is a shared responsibility," he said.

He said officials will re-measure speeds in areas previously targeted but declined to give figures on how well the program, in its second year, has done in reducing speeding.


"You know what? It's just an awareness campaign," public health nurse Carol Tobia said when asked what officials can point to in showing pamphlets to get drivers to slow down.

The program, she noted, helped more drivers buckle children up correctly during a blitz in Keswick last month.

About 80 per cent of motorists incorrectly restrained kids at the start of the month but by its end that number was down to 50.

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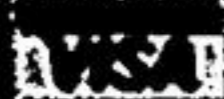
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