

Driver safety course designed to help seniors maintain independence

BY JENNIFER A. BOWEN
News-Democrat

When Charles McCaskill started driving, there were no lines on the roads and seat belts had not yet been invented for vehicles.

Today, McCaskill, 75, of Edwardsville, is teaching senior drivers how to adjust to being on the road in the 21st century, learn how to deal with changes to their vision, reaction times and all kind of new gadgets on cars, external distractions and changing rules of the road in Illinois.

"When I took the driver safety course, it was very enlightening to me," McCaskill said. "There were a lot of things I've done for the last 50 years that I had to change. It really helps me and my driving and being more comfortable and safe in my car."

March 21-31 has been declared Senior Driving Awareness Week in Illinois and in recognition of that, the Illinois Department of Transportation, the Illinois Secretary of State, the Illinois Department on Aging and AARP are promoting traffic safety and encouraging senior drivers to take advantage of driving courses designed for them.

Of the 9 million licensed drivers in Illinois, 14 percent, or about 1.2 million, are 65 years old or older, according to statistics from the Illinois Secretary of State.

"Our goal is to have seniors maintain independence and mobility," said Rick Fults, senior driving instructor with the Illinois Secretary of State. "Last year we held 320 classes at 320 locations. We encourage everyone to take advantage of these classes."

The state's Super Seniors Program combines Rules of the Road instruction, a vision screening and a driver safety component to help seniors brush up on their driving knowledge before they are required to renew a

DRIVER SAFETY CLASSES AVAILABLE

For more information about the AARP Driver Safety Program and when the 8-hour classes are held, visit www.aarp.org/drive or call 888-227-7669.

Additional information

Secretary of State Driver Services Department Rules of the Road class schedule:

• **Bond County:** Clinton County Senior Center, 630 Eighth St., Carlyle. At 9 a.m. May 18 and Aug. 17. Contact Lisa Hellmann at 594-2321.

• **Madison County:** Collinsville Township Senior Center, 420 E. Main St. At 1 p.m. June 21, Sept. 20 and Dec. 13. Contact Albert Artimisi at 344-7787; Jarvis Township Senior Center, 410 Wickliffe St. in Troy at 1 p.m. April 7, July 7 and Oct. 6. Contact Sherry Brendel at 667-2022; Main Street Community Center at 1003 N. Main St. in Edwardsville. At 1 p.m. April 27, June 22 and Oct. 26. Contact Jackie Kamp at 656-0300; Senior Services Plus, Inc. Multipurpose Center, 2603 N. Rodgers Ave. in Alton. At 1:30 p.m. May 20, Aug. 19 and Nov. 18. Contact Margaret Lanier at 465-3298 and at the Weinheimer Community Building, 1100 Main St. in Highland. At 9 a.m. June 21, Aug. 16 and Nov. 15. Contact Michael

Lennen at 654-6071.

• **Monroe County:** Columbia Western Egyptian EOC Senior Center, 504 DD Road, Suite 2, in Columbia. At 10 a.m. July 5 and Nov. 1. Contact Pat Stumpf at 281-7414; Waterloo Western Egyptian EOC Senior Center, 207 S. Fourth St. in Waterloo. At 1:30 p.m. April 5, Aug. 2 and Dec. 6. Contact Kim Elizalde at 939-8880.

• **St. Clair County:** Belleville Senior Citizens Club, 802 W. C Street at 10 a.m. May 12 and Sept. 8. Contact Jack Coyne at 233-1037; Cahokia Public Library, 140 Cahokia Park Drive at 1:30 p.m. April 6, Aug. 3 and Dec. 7. Contact Kathy Armstrong at 332-1491; Clyde C. Jordan Senior Center, 6755 State St. in East St. Louis at 10 a.m. July 13 and Nov. 9. Contact Lillie Lucas at 293-6700; Freeburg Township Building, 203 S. Richland St. at 1:30 p.m. June 2 and Sept. 1. Contact Jan McDonald at 539-5639; Mascoutah Senior Citizens Center, 227 N. Market St. at 9 a.m. April 8, July 8 and Oct. 14. Contact Sandra Hakanson at 566-8758; O'Fallon Township building, 801 E. State St. at 1:30 p.m. April 20, July 20 and Nov. 16. Contact Debbie Dawson at 632-3517.

drivers license.

"These classes are to help," said Roy Dolgos, deputy director of the division of traffic safety with the Illinois Department of Transportation. "They aren't to scare or intimidate them or to try to take their driving privileges away."

Classes cover things like changing mirrors to enhance visibility, adjusting the seat position, being aware of other drivers and other distractions and being aware that their reaction time is slower than it was when they were younger.

"We have a lot of folks

with a lot of questions on driving and caregivers with questions about driving safely," said Joy Paeth, chief executive officer with the Area Agency on Aging of Southwestern Illinois. "We strongly encourage older person to participate in driver safety courses. As we age we experience changes, both physically and cognitively, our vision changes, it becomes harder to drive at night. It is great to have these driver courses to help older adults to live as independently and be as mobile as possible for as long as possible."

Judge orders police officer to stay away from comrade

BY GEORGE PAWLACZYK AND BETH HUNDSORFER
News-Democrat

ALORTON — An altercation at the village Police Department led to a legal rarity — one police officer obtaining a temporary "no stalking" court order that requires a fellow cop to keep his distance.

St. Clair County Circuit Court Judge Brian Babka on Monday signed a "stalking no-contact order" good until April 11, that directs part-time police officer Michael Baxton not to come closer than 500 feet to fellow officer Marcus R. Smith.

Smith, a nine-year veteran of the department, stated in a court document that Baxton, who was off-duty and in his private vehicle, sought his help to stop a speeder, but Smith said he was too busy with other calls. A confrontation later ensued at the Police Department.

While Baxton, a candidate for the Cahokia School District 187 Board of Education and a former

East St. Louis police chief, must stay away from Smith, he is allowed to come to the station to work as directed by Alorton Police Chief Corey Allen.

"I don't know what this guy is talking about," said Baxton, who also works as a truant officer for the Cahokia school district where his wife, Willie Baxton, was elected to the board in 2009. The election is April 5.

In an application for the emergency no-contact order, Smith said he was on duty on Friday night and had an assault suspect handcuffed to a bench in a case. The victim of the assault was at a hospital in danger of losing her leg. He then was forced to leave that case to investigate a possible suicide, Smith said.

As he responded, Smith said he received a radio call from Baxton who was off-duty in his private vehicle, stating a car was fleeing at 82 mph. Allen, the police chief, joined the chase in his official car and stopped the speeder, who

was released without a citation.

Later that night, when Baxton showed up at the station, Smith said Baxton angrily confronted him with vulgarities and demanded to know why he had not come to his aid.

A report made by Smith, which was attached to the application for court order, stated that Baxton, accompanied by his wife, made threats at the station and moved toward Smith, but backed off. The next day, Baxton blocked his squad car that was parked in the department's lot, Smith said.

Three Illinois State Police officers and a St. Clair County Sheriff Department sergeant showed up at the station on Friday night in response to a call for help, but no one was charged.

Contact reporter George Pawlaczyk at gpawlaczyk@bnd.com or 239-2625. Contact reporter Beth Hundsdorfer at bhundsdorfer@bnd.com or 239-2570.

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GRAND HAPPENING

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Pictured are the CLR Group which raised over \$2,500 for this event for Big Brothers Big Sisters or Southwestern Illinois.



Pictured are (L to R) LaDonna Boyer representing Dynamic Research Corporation recognized for the most teams participating - 4 and (center) accepting the "Homer" pin, Patrick Downey representing CLR Group which raised the most pledges with over \$2,500 collected and Big Brothers President and CEO Barbara Cempura.

DEFENSE CONTRACTORS BATTLE IT OUT ON THE LANES

Twelve teams representing 6 defense contractor groups including Dynamic Research Corporation, Northrop Grumman, CLR Group, CSC - Computer Science Corporation, TriCor and Unysis came together to raise over \$8,500 for Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwestern Illinois. The teams participated in the signature fundraiser Bowl For Kids Sake at Bel Air Bowling Center in Belleville on Saturday, March 5. The funds that were raised by the teams will be used to support Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwestern Illinois and their programs which includes "Operation Mentor".

"This is a special group of folks who come out to participate in this event each year to help raise money and awareness for Big Brothers Big Sisters." Barbara Cempura, president and CEO Big Brothers Big Sisters of Southwestern Illinois.

Operation Mentor is when a military parent is deployed, Big Brothers Big Sisters can provide a friend or buddy for a child during the time the parent is deployed. The Big Brother or Big Sister volunteer does not take the place of the parent. No one can do that! They are paired with a child who might benefit from some individual attention. The volunteer and child spend time together doing activities they both enjoy.

Boy ages 7 - 14 and girl ages 6-14 are eligible to enroll in Operation Mentor when a parent completes an application. A parent and child are interviewed in their home to let the staff know of their preferences for a volunteer and the activities a child enjoys. Staff will contact the parent, child and volunteer regularly to ensure all parties are happy with the match.

For more information about Operation Mentor or Bowl For Kids' Sake, call Big Brothers Big Sisters at 618 398-3162 or email bbbsbell@peaknet.net.