

The JourneySafe Challenge ...

*Bringing JourneySafe to your school
or youth organization*

*A program guide designed for educators, teens and parents
who are inspired to help reduce the astronomical number of
teen automobile related fatalities in America and save our
nation's most precious resource — our youth.*



“Because of all my incredible experiences with my friend, Jill, I am reminded of how “wonderful” life really is. I used to give her a hard time about her adorable little feet, but now they remind me of what Eleanor Roosevelt once said, “Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints on your heart.”

In memory of Jill, I will always JourneySafe.

Joanna W. Age 17, 2005

Take the JourneySafe Challenge



Bring JourneySafe to your School or Youth Group

Many high schools and youth groups have developed programs or launched initiatives to discourage under-age drinking, drugs and violence. Federal and state funding even provides for many of them. Considering that these dangers **are not nearly** the deadliest threats to today's teens, it begs the question, **"Why isn't the teen driving crisis being addressed in a similar manner?"**

We cannot afford to wait for an answer from the government or for federal assistance in developing strategic prevention programs - not while we continue to lose **17 teens a day, 500 teens a month and 6,000 teens every single year in US automobile crashes.**

Step One: Consider our current crisis strategies - response vs. prevention

The lives of everyone in a community are profoundly and forever impacted when a teen is killed in a tragedy and the most common of all teen tragedies is the loss of a beloved teen in a senseless car crash. We cannot deny how often it happens, which is why schools, churches and communities are prepared to immediately mobilize with a "response scenario". Grief counselors are dispatched onto campuses, parents send flowers and cards, make food, run errands or sit with families that cannot be comforted. Teens set up memorials by the roadside, on the campus quad or entrance; they hold candlelight vigils, crying and praying and asking the inevitable questions for which there are no answers, "Why this teen; why my friend?" Teachers and leaders give hugs and offer the usual platitudes, knowing they will never really have the answers to those questions.

Response scenarios are natural and necessary. But all the counseling in the world, all the candlelight vigils and memorials cannot help a teen make sense out of the senseless. The powerless feeling in the aftermath of a tragedy motivates us to take action in the form of our response scenarios because as human beings it is imperative that we *do* something about our pain and suffering. As parents, educators and youth leaders it is especially imperative that we *do* something, make attempts however feeble they may be, to ease the pain and suffering of the young people entrusted to our care. Teens themselves have an overwhelming need to do something lasting that will make a difference during such times of crisis and heartbreak. Often it is the only way they can begin the recovery process.

JourneySafe challenges you to do MORE. Taking action in the immediate aftermath of a tragedy is not enough; inevitably another precious teen will be killed, and the response scenario repeated. Honoring these teens by grieving for a month or two, even a year or two is not enough; it accomplishes nothing permanent. We urge you to take action in advance. Keep your response scenarios in place, but **DO SOMETHING NOW** to keep from having to use them so often. Honor the memories of the teens you cannot bring back by taking action as a school community or youth group to keep others alive. Adopt a "prevention scenario".

We have one for you. It's ready to implement; it's simple and sensible; it appeals to teens; the cost is negligible; it has the potential to save hundreds of lives; and if even just one life is saved by using it, your efforts and time will have been worth the *challenge to bring JourneySafe to your school.*

The JourneySafe Challenge - Continued

Step Two: Be a Visionary ... Take the First Steps

- Think of JourneySafe as a tree with three main branches (teens, parents and educators or leaders). Eventually your program may incorporate other branches including law enforcement and other support service agencies or organizations. Imagine your JourneySafe tree/program eventually growing tall and strong in the middle of your school or youth group community. Initiative (along with aid from the larger JourneySafe organization and the materials and resources in the JourneySafe manual for starters) is the seed. Plant it, water it and feed it with your own enthusiasm and creativity. As it grows, remember **the most important branch on the tree represents the teens**. Teens who embrace and practice and share JourneySafe provide a strong central core upon which the tree (the program) may grow and flourish, but it cannot happen without the balance, the shelter and support provided by the other branches.
- Start small and remember to **“do a few things well”** rather than attempt too much at first. Every fire begins with a single spark and the power of one cannot be underestimated. Even if you are just one teen, parent or teacher you can introduce JourneySafe into your school or community. Tell someone else about it and ask for their help. All it takes is a handful of key people to get the ball rolling - a supportive administrator, a concerned teacher and parent, two or three teens to act as a **steering committee** as you move forward and commission your “task force”.
- Use appropriate JourneySafe Handbook sections for guidance and challenge yourself or your group (teens, parents, or teachers) to attempt at least one JourneySafe project a year. The manual is divided into a teaching guide, plus teen and parent challenge sections filled with valuable information and tools that will help each group better protect themselves, their own teens, and all teens. There are suggested activities and projects for each branch of the task force; each activity reinforces the activities of the others and strengthens the program as a whole.

Step Three: Develop Your JourneySafe “Task Force”

- **Maintain your passion - enthusiasm is contagious.** The evidence of your success presents itself every day in which you DON'T read about another teen killed on the highway in your community. One teacher teaching one class about JourneySafe can prompt one student to initiate a school wide pre-prom JourneySafe campaign or vice-versa. One parent sharing an e-mail about JourneySafe with the PTSA president or the principal may lead to a school wide teen parent awareness assembly. One person putting the JourneySafe logo up in their car or classroom window, or wearing a JourneySafe tee-shirt will cause another person to wonder and to ask about it.
- **Grow your program slowly and steadily** by encouraging one student, one parent, one teacher at a time to get involved. Give each one something very small to do at first, some way to help and to feel proud of their efforts.
- **Start using “JourneySafe” and “Remember the Five”** as farewells to each other at the end of class or at the end of the school day. Do the same at home as your kids go off to school. Make **“designated passenger”** a byword used so often that the concept eventually becomes as deeply ingrained into the adolescent experience as “designated driver” is in the adult world.
- **Keep your steering committee relatively small, but strong and flexible** with member leaders from every branch of the program. While several staff, student and parent members can and hopefully will be involved, we recommend that a faculty leader play the primary leadership role as students and parents and teens will naturally be passing the torch more often to those coming up behind them.

The JourneySafe Challenge - Continued

Step Four: Mobilizing Your Entire School and/or Community

Ideally every member of a school or youth group community should make an investment in the JourneySafe program and each person can play a vital part in its success. Following is a list of roles each might play in implementing JourneySafe in their own unique ways.

Administrators

- Make teen driving and passenger safety a school-wide initiative.
- Introduce JourneySafe at a staff meeting. Screen the materials, the DVDs, review the statistics and critical issues and gain ideas from staff members about ways to implement the program on campus.
- Commission a JourneySafe Task Force if the school doesn't already have one or lend official approval to those who have already established themselves in this capacity.
- Introduce the program at a PTSA meeting and the district or board of directors. Distribute some of the parent material available in this handbook.
- Introduce a JourneySafe campaign or event to the entire school community. Recognize those staff and students who participate.
- Encourage students to take the JourneySafe Challenge by making the JourneySafe promise, signing the pledge card and keeping it in their wallet as a reminder to take their responsibility as a driver **and** a passenger seriously.

Counselors, Coaches & PE Teachers

- Meet with student leaders to introduce the program and gain insight about the best ways your department can support implementing the program.
- Participate as a part of the JourneySafe Task Force
- Encourage athletes and ASB to endorse JourneySafe by wearing a JourneySafe logo emblem on their helmets or adding it to their ASB emblems.
- Dedicate at least one home game each season as a JourneySafe Awareness Night in honor of teens who have been killed in senseless car crashes and recognition of the serious nature of this modern American crisis. Designate a well-spoken student athlete to say a few words during half time and allow the task force to set up a booth with JourneySafe parent & teen materials.

Department Chairs

- Determine how each department or grade level can become involved or play a role in the program.
- Designate a particular content area in which to show a follow up DVD such as "Drive it Right" or a different JourneySafe DVD (especially if driver education is not part of your school's curriculum)
- Do appropriate follow up activities to help students visualize the facts and reinforce the statistics. Examples: **Math** projects that truly demonstrate how many the number rather the numeral 6,000 represents. (During a JourneySafe walk-a-thon at one high school, participants tied 6,000 ribbons on the fences around the track, the effect was visually staggering.) In **Science** classes, create labs that teach teens about automobile dynamics - what happens to unrestrained passengers in a collision. **Fine Arts** classes can focus on creative projects and demonstrations that pique students interest, script their own play or video to share during a pre-prom or winter formal event, or homecoming rally. **Psychology** classes can do research and discuss the impact and expression of teen grief. History teachers can, and should, urge students to discuss the one current event that most affects them - 17 of their peers killed every day on US highways.

Parent Organizations

- Disseminate information about JourneySafe and the program to parents. (More specific ideas in parent section.)
- Hold a special PTSA or parent meeting about this issue inviting the JourneySafe founders, local law enforcement; parents of teen victims, student leaders and staff members prepared to discuss how to ignite the community over these issues.
- Spread the word parent-by-parent, via an e-mail campaign that links directly to an eye-opening JourneySafe parent presentation which can be shared family-to-family.

Student Leadership Organizations (ASB, PAL, YCC, SADD, Etc.)

- Refer to the JourneySafe Teen Challenge section of the manual or on the website and become inspired to DRIVE and RIDE the JourneySafe Way." Included are a number of ideas and suggestions designed specifically with you in mind.

The JourneySafe Challenge

Step Five: Success and Recognition

Any school or group (youth organization, church, afterschool program, etc.) with the initiative to adopt JourneySafe program and implement it on their campus or in their community deserves recognition. Tell us about your progress along the way. If you need support, we're here to provide it. Envision your teen driver and passenger safety program growing to a point in which teens are practicing it, leaders are teaching and facilitating it, and parents are reinforcing it at home. The objective is simple. Work toward a time when every student in your community at least understands what JourneySafe is all about and **many** are using JourneySafe ideas to help protect themselves, their friends and others.

- **Don't be discouraged if you can't reach everyone.** Remember your primary target is that group of teens, like Jill and Jonathan, who aren't "too cool" or too indifferent to face the facts and admit their risk potential as young drivers — those who will pay attention to good advice especially when it comes from someone who clearly cares about them.
- Let us know about your efforts. Contact us at www.journeysafe.org. so we may present you with a commendation designating your school as an "Official JourneySafe School" recognized by the Gillian Sabet Memorial Foundation. **Your school, youth group or other organization will be listed on our website as an innovative leader among an elite list of others** who've chosen to address this serious issue by their own initiative (without federal aid or funding and without having been mandated to do so by any authority than their own conscience and genuine concern for the youth of our nation).
- You don't have to be a "public" school to be endorsed by JourneySafe. In fact you don't even have to be a school at all. The JourneySafe message and program adapts and fits in any environment. Public or private high schools, middle schools, even elementary schools can promote the "friends protect friends" concept that is the basic premise of JourneySafe. Churches youth groups, after-school youth program agencies, boys and girls clubs, scout groups, virtually any youth program can adopt and teach the JourneySafe philosophy and help save young lives.

Keep your program Growing



Remember the image of the tree. Whether your school or group is large or small, whether you have 30 participants or 300 in your JourneySafe program, focus on keeping the three main branches (teens, parents and leaders) involved and committed.

If the leaves represent lives, trust that many may still be living which might have fallen long before, *IF NOT FOR YOUR EFFORTS.*

Remember that each life is still fragile and at risk without the continued nourishment and support that education, awareness and adult concern provides.

Be a visionary, be a leader, be a HERO in memory of Jill and Jon ... and many thousands of teens who've had their lives cut cruelly short, because **they did NOT know** the risks, and did not have the tools which you now have and can provide to teens and parents in your local community.

Keep your response scenarios in place; but make a strong sensible prevention scenario your first priority.