

Texting and Driving Crackdown

continued ▲ from page 3

this month to increase the awareness of the dangers of driving while distracted from cell phones, text messages and other devices.

The tagline is simple: U Drive. U Text. U Pay.

The \$8.5 million campaign has also led to some "high visibility enforcement" of distracted driving laws across the nation, including police agencies in Oregon and Washington.

Portland police spokesperson Pete Simpson said while the Rose

City hasn't officially increased patrols for the effort, the police bureau's traffic division is always on the lookout for distracted drivers and run enforcement missions somewhat frequently and sometimes in cooperation with other Metro area law enforcement agencies.

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration released a 30-second anti-texting-and-driving ad that has been popping up across TV screens and mobile devices this month. The spot shows a group of young people in

a car while the driver checks a text message in motion; suddenly the car is plowed into by a large truck flipping the vehicle over multiple times. The driver dies.

Oregon Department of Transportation's Shelley Snow says that the distractions available to motorists, bicyclists, and even pedestrians continue to grow.

According to ODOT statistics, between 2008 and 2012, 65 people were killed in crashes where a "distracted driver" was a contributing factor.

"Bottom line is: driving is a complex task and too much is at risk to not pay attention to that task," says Snow, "We need to continually impress upon people - anyone using the transportation system - that it's too important to not pay attention when you are out and about. You can relax later, but first get to your destination safely by focusing on driving/biking/walking... and don't get distracted."

At the top of this year, an Oregon law went into effect doubling the maximum fine drivers can be finalized for using their mobile devices in transit to \$500.

Oregon State Police stopped

and handed out citations to over 5,100 "distracted drivers" last year.

Portland Community College student Lois Peatree knows firsthand the dangers of distracted driving. Her friend died last year in a crash where texting and driving was a factor. She asks that people restrict themselves from what can often be a burning temptation for people her age to reach for the phone at the wheel.

"People die every day from it," she says "It's scary. Your mom could die, your dad could die, and your best friend could die. You could die! That's a big word! You could just not be here."

Sounding off on Texting and Driving

Portland residents offer their views

BY DONOVAN M. SMITH
THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Laws and data are one thing, but adherence to safety is another. We took to the streets to get some everyday Portlanders to speak out on the issue of texting and driving.

"It's crazier than drinking and driving. I don't know, I think that people should get fined, like real big time," says Myldred Silvia, "Nothing's that important. To let you take your eyes off the road. Kids are not getting it."

Valerie McBee says she has long been a "stickler" for adhering to the laws of the road, especially in terms of distracted driving. However a new phone has been tempting her to break her practice.

"Now that I've got this new phone I'm like—ah!—I'm trying to leave it in the back seat so I don't even have the temptation," she says.

Jennifer Carter says she was aware of the doubling of fines that Oregon put into place this year, but says it's not enough. Her proposal would be a few days in jail to hammer at the potential deadly consequences from a distracted driver.

"I think they should do some jail time, I really think they should. And

I'll sign anything on that," she says. One young driver says though he knows the dangers of texting and driving, it's a habit he's been working to break.

A recent close call served as even more motivation for David Seraya, who said he tried it on the freeway one day and almost got in a car accident.



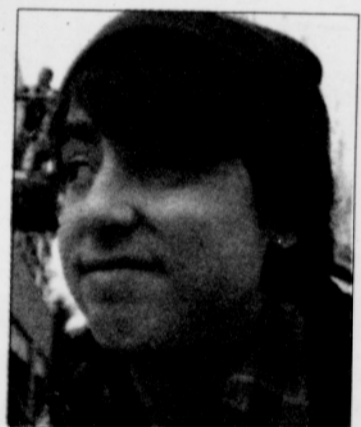
Myldred Silvia



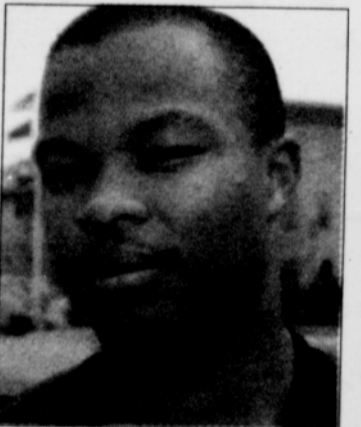
Valerie McBee



Jennifer Carter



Keegan "Kaz" Alberts



David Seraya

PHOTOS BY DONOVAN M. SMITH/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Keegan "Kaz" Alberts says he doesn't drive on account of his epilepsy, but whenever a friend in the driver's seat whips out their phone on the road he says he tries to take it from them.

"I just think it's stupid," he says. His advice to people who want to text and drive: pull over, or don't do it at all.

A TIP FROM A FORMER SMOKER

DO YOUR HEART A FAVOR. QUIT SMOKING.

Roosevelt, Heart attack at age 45
Virginia

Smoking causes immediate damage to your body. For Roosevelt, it caused his heart attack. Your heart attack risk drops as soon as you quit smoking. For free help, call 1-800-QUIT-NOW.



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