



Submitted photo

Members of the Coventry High School junior class sign a pledge board promising to not text while driving.

# Police, AG tell Coventry students: It can wait

## Students hear presentation on the dangers of texting while driving

COVENTRY – People today often remark that their whole lives are on their cell phones. Unfortunately, too many lives have been lost because of the distractions of using a phone while behind the wheel of a motor vehicle. That’s the heart of the message of “It Can Wait,” an ongoing campaign from the Office of Rhode Island Attorney General, the Rhode Island State Police, and AT&T.

On Monday, representatives from law enforcement agencies visited with students at Coventry High School as part of the campaign. The presentation highlighted the dangerous and sometimes deadly consequences of distracted driving. With the state’s “hands free” law now in effect, it’s more important than ever to educate teens and young adults against using their cell phone

while driving.

“Last year, Rhode Island took a great step forward in cracking down on distracted driving with the passage of ‘hands-free,’ but passing a law is not going to make the habit go away,” said Attorney General Peter Kilmartin. “Education is a key component to changing driver behavior and teaching young drivers the right behavior from the very start. The response by students to the It Can Wait school program has been very positive since we launched it six years ago. We have made 84 school presentations since then, often returning to the same school year after year to speak with the new batch of young drivers. We realize that it can be difficult to change behavior, but we hope that through peer influence and by hearing some of

the tragic, real life situations that have resulted from distracted driving, more teens will realize that no text message, snap, tweet or Instagram is worth losing their own life, or worse, taking the life of another person. It Can Wait.”

During the school assembly, students watched the powerful documentary “The Last Text,” featuring young people whose lives have been forever impacted by distracted driving. They also signed a pledge to not use their phones while driving and to serve as ambassadors by asking others to put away their phones while in the car.

Colonel Ann C. Assumpico, Superintendent of the Rhode Island State Police and Director of the Department of

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# Wait

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Public Safety, said, "Distracted driving has become a leading cause of death here in Rhode Island and across the country. The Rhode Island State Police supports the It Can Wait program as a valuable tool for educating young drivers about the dangers of distracted driving and driving home the message that a single text or cell phone call behind the wheel can have deadly consequences."

Patricia Jacobs, president, AT&T New England, said, "Since we launched our It Can Wait program, Rhode Island has always been one of our strongest, most committed partners. We're so proud to continue our partnership with Attorney General Kilmartin and the Rhode Island State Police to continue highlighting the dangers of distracted driving. We've been spreading this message for nearly a decade now, and we truly believe our collective efforts have helped make a difference. But we also understand there is more work to be done. We need to keep talking about this issue, and we need to keep reminding our friends and loved ones to put their phones down while they're behind the wheel."

The statistics remain staggering. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for 15- to 19-year-olds in the United States. In 2015 alone, 3,477 people were killed, and 391,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers.

School officials who are interested in bringing the "It Can Wait" program to their school are asked to contact Donna Kirwan, assistant public information officer, at (401) 274-4400 ext. 2268 or [dkirwan@riag.ri.gov](mailto:dkirwan@riag.ri.gov).