

Georgia lawyers join nationwide effort to minimize distracted driving

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If **Michael Wilensky** and other lawyers in Georgia have their way, one day drivers might be as vigilant about distractions as they are today about buckling seatbelts.

Wilensky, an attorney practicing throughout Georgia including DeKalb County and a member of the Georgia Trial Lawyers Association, has been involved in making presentations at schools, churches and other organizations about distracted driving.

"I tell people 10 years ago the first thing people did was never put on their seatbelt," said Wilensky. "Today the first thing they do—no question about it—is put on their seatbelt."

He added that wearing seatbelt was popularized through decades of public awareness campaigns.

In recognition of National Distracted Driving Awareness Month, the Georgia Trial Lawyers Association (GTLA) has announced a year-round partnership with EndDD.org (End Distracted Driving). Through this partnership, GTLA's 2,000 members will be encouraged to deliver presentations in schools, civic organizations and other community groups in an effort to raise distracted driving awareness across the state. Attendees will also be encouraged to sign the Family Safe Driving Agreement, which outlines steps to make roads safer.

EndDD.org's campaign began in 2009 after the death of 21-year-old **Casey Feldman** at the hands of a distracted driver. It has already reached 172,000 students and drivers in 41 different states through a personalized, interactive presentation that gives audiences the facts about the dangers of distracted driving.

"As a father whose daughter was killed by a distracted driver, I have seen first-hand the devastating effect that reckless decisions on our roadways can have," said **Joel Feldman**, a trial lawyer and the Founder of EndDD.org. "Our efforts at EndDD.org have been supported tremendously by trial lawyers across the country, including Georgia. Distracted driving deaths are easily preventable."

"Distracted driving on our roads is an increasingly prevalent epidemic that not only puts the driver at risk but also risks the lives of each and every person around them. In fact, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates that in a single year, more than 5,000 people are killed on U.S. roadways and another 448,000 individuals are injured in motor vehicle crashes that involved distracted driving," said GTLA President **Buck Rogers**.

Wilensky said he began making the presentations two years ago and they are well received.

He said the presentations are effective because of all the work Feldman did gathering input from psychologists and guidance counselors. The approach is information sharing via multimedia

and empowers audiences to decide the right thing to do.

"It's so effective because of the different videos, talks, interaction, asking questions," Wilensky said. "It teaches them the facts."

He stressed that distracted driving isn't just about using cellphones while behind the wheel but also other activities that takes drivers eyes off the road such as eating, putting on makeup, reaching for anything. He noted several tragic situations such as a man attempting to take off his jacket while driving who got into an accident and a girl who was checking her vehicle's navigation system and struck and killed a 60-year-old man.

"If you need to do something, just pull over to the side of the road," Wilensky said. "When done get back on the road."

During the presentations, audiences are taught how to deal with various situations such as when a passenger notices that their driver is distracted. He suggests offering to take the phone and make the call or send the text for the driver as an option.

His audiences include middle and high school students as well as adults, and Wilensky is quick to add that the message isn't just for the young. Many parents are inadvertently teaching their children to multi-task while behind the wheel due to their own distracted driving habits, he said.

"You learn from what you see," Wilensky said.

HOROSCOPES

April 2014 — Week 3



December 22–
January 19

Hooray! The trying times are over, Capricorn, and fun is on the way. Travel plans take shape. Prepare to have a relaxing time with friends and family.



March 21–
April 19

Clean and clutter free is your motto this week, Aries. Start with the most neglected areas of your home. A tantalizing offer is too good to be true.



June 22–
July 22

Crazy, Cancer. The ideas are flying, but rather than try to implement them all, you might want to weed out the good from the bad. A decision is firm.



September 23–
October 22

Ooh-la-la, Libra. You make a rare find. Be careful whom you tell. A lapse in communication at home leads to laughter. Enjoy the moment.



January 20–
February 18

Press on, Aquarius. There is no obstacle you cannot overcome. A mixup in communication tests patience at home. Work quickly to resolve the situation.



April 20–
May 20

Don't underestimate the value of relaxation. Take time out to reminisce and rejuvenate, Taurus. You will return with a fresh perspective.



July 23–
August 22

Dear friends drop in and out all week long. Roll out the welcome mat, Leo, and be supportive whatever is shared. A movie title catches your eye.



October 23–
November 21

Your financial outlook improves tremendously, and you are finally in a position to save. Save, Scorpio, not spend. A favor is returned in a big way.



February 19–
March 20

Springtime weather get the creative juices flowing, and several projects come to completion. A friend has a request. Honor it if you can, Pisces.



May 21–
June 21

You throw yourself into everything you do, Gemini. But not everyone works like you. Understand that and be prepared to compensate for any shortcomings that arise.



August 23–
September 22

Direct you are not, Virgo, but direct you must be to resolve a situation once and for all. An article inspires you to take the initiative on a project.



November 22–
December 21

You are blessed more than you can count this week, Sagittarius. Enjoy. A friend's world is turned upside down by the arrival of someone from their past.