

Morristown Gets Street Smarter Through Safety Campaign

By Henry M. Holden

Between 2013 to 2015, there were 51 pedestrian-automobile-related accidents in Morristown, including one fatality. Twenty-one percent of the accidents were a result of pedestrians jaywalking, and 46 percent of the accidents were a result of pedestrians struck while crossing within a marked crosswalk.

As a community, Morristown is a busy place with the Morris County Seat, Morristown Medical Center, the Mayo Performing Arts Center, and hundreds of businesses, and restaurants. Both drivers and pedestrians should understand their personal responsibilities in creating safer streets.

Subsequently, TransOptions, a transportation management association for northwest New Jersey, the Morristown Police Department, and town officials coordinated a plan called Street Smart, in April 2016.

The program was responding to New Jersey being designated

a pedestrian "focus" state by the Federal Highway Administration. In 2015, New Jersey ranked 15th in the nation in pedestrian fatalities, according to a recent report from the Governor's Highway Safety Association.

Street Smart is a pedestrian safety campaign that uses grass roots outreach, education, and enforcement, to change unsafe behaviors on the streets of Morristown.

Street Smart aims to educate those who walk and drive in the community to increase their awareness with life-saving practices and signage.

After the success of the program in the Spring 2016, TransOptions, the town of Morristown and the Morristown Police Department, continued their efforts in the spring of 2017 to make pedestrian safety a priority.

Pedestrian awareness in both positive walking and driving behaviors, and increase awareness of pedestrian safety laws was part

of the program.

In the Spring of 2017 following a month-long campaign that combined education and enforcement techniques, new data showed that the public awareness effort continues to pay off.

Results from a survey showed that there was a 21-percent increase in awareness of the Street Smart campaign, and more people were aware that they could receive a summons for crossing against the traffic signal when walking. There was also a decrease in drivers using cellphones, after a pre-campaign survey revealed 16-percent of self-confessed drivers were distracted.

Data from speed-tracking devices on Morristown's Speedwell Ave. showed most drivers traveling at or under the posted speed limit. This was an increase of six-percent from the first campaign. Mid-block crossing were also reduced at busy intersections and there was a reduction in pedestrian cellphone use while



crossing the street.

The Morristown Police Department gave more than 400 offenders tickets or warnings to drivers and pedestrians during the drive. To reinforce the message, Street Smart posters were displayed on street signs, throughout the community.

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"Educational outreach to Morristown High School students enrolled in driver's education was made with efforts to influence these new drivers with in-class presentations," says Laura Cerutti of TransOptions. "It focused on how new drivers can be ready to drive safely around pedestrians and the busy traffic we find in

Morristown. The program we feel was very successful over the two years. The recognition of it certainly carried over. The campaign definitely saw a reduction in Jay walking.

"One thing we did that we feel was very successful was the level of outreach to the community," she says.

"Since Morristown has a big

St. Patrick's Day parade, and it is so well-known we tried an experiment and I think it really paid off," says Cerutti. "To increase awareness of the safety messages, we used Snapchat as an outreach tool. We created a special Snapchat filter with a St. Patrick's Day theme and it said, 'Heads-up phones-down when walking and driving.' That was viewed

about 16,000 times. We know that Snapchat is widely used among the younger crowds, so we thought the message really hit hard with that population."

For more information on Street Smart and to view both the 2016 and spring 2017 final reports for Morristown, visit TransOptions.org/street-smart, or call TransOptions at (973) 267-7600.