

Keeping city roads safe

Operation Safe Break focuses on distracted drivers and speeders on the road during the March Break

By Kelly Gagné

With students out on their March break, local OPP officers will be focusing on catching speeders and distracted drivers to help keep roads safe.

“Operation Safe Break” began on March 10 and will run until March 18. Officers will have zero tolerance for those who drive distracted, aggressively or speed during the break. The aim of the operation is to help reduce injuries and deaths on the roads, trails and waterways.

Quinte Region Traffic Coalition (QRTC) is a partnership of the Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit, Belleville Police Service, Stirling-Rawdon Police Service and the OPP detachments serving Central Hastings, Quinte West, Prince Edward County and Bancroft. With this coalition, officers will be out monitoring local roads and reducing the risk of dangerous drivers according to the QRTC.

Distracted driving has been a problem in Ontario for the last few years. Cellphones and GPS units have become one of the biggest distractions for drivers young and old.

The ban on handheld devices has been in effect since Oct. 26, 2009, making it illegal for drivers to talk, text, type, dial or e-mail using handheld communications, with the exception of emergency calls.

According to the Ministry of Transportation, studies have shown that a driver using a cellphone is four times more likely to be in a collision than a driver focused on the road.

Kaytee Townson, 25, of Trenton, was convicted of distracted driving late last year, when she was caught with her phone in hand while driving near her townhome.

“I was looking for my phone because I dropped it in my car. I didn’t even see the officer parked over by a stop sign, and when I found my phone, it was in my hand and then the cop was pulling me over a minute later,” said Townson.

“I was distracted because I was bent over looking for my phone when I should have been watching the road. I will definitely pay more attention now after paying the \$155 fine.”



Photo by Kelly Gagné

Provincial Constables Ray Lalonde and Dan Wilton are two of Quinte West’s traffic management officers who were taking part in Operation Safe Break, which targets speeding, aggressive and distracted drivers, the program runs until March 18.

Officers don’t need to be parked to catch people for distracted driving. Officers on duty will also catch people when they are stopped at a stoplight, or in parking lots.

“Distracted driving charges are solely based on observation. We have to see it happening. It can be tricky, but as trained police officers, keen observation is a skill of ours,” said Const. Dave Snider of Quinte West OPP.

wConst. Dan Wilton has been a traffic management officer for Quinte West for 31 years, and says that with the new laser radar technology, catching people with distracted driving is becoming easier.

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Const. Dan Wilton

ten, we can catch speeding motorists from over 300 metres away, and with the zoom on the scope, we can see into their vehicles and see people eating, or talking on cellphones,” said Wilton.

Cell phones and GPS units aren’t the only causes of distracted driving.

Women who apply makeup while driving, those who adjust the radio or play with CDs, eat or drink, even chat with passengers in their vehicle are distractions. Anything that takes your eyes off the road, or your hands off of the wheel, are distractions and can lead to being charged.

Wilton’s partner, Ray Lalonde, described some stories of his experience of pulling people over who were

speeding and eating, applying makeup, and he even pulled over one man who was driving and doing about 115 km/h while reading a cookbook.

“It was probably one of the most bizarre scenarios I’ve ever seen. It was extremely dangerous for him to be driving at that speed and to not have his full attention on the road,” said Lalonde.

“A lot of the time, the people charged with distracted driving aren’t paying enough attention to even realize that the officer on duty is watching them commit the offence. It just proves how dangerous distracted driving can be, and how much of your attention is taken away from the road when you’re on your phone,” said Snider.

Spring cleaning comes early

Public relations students hold successful event with electronics drop-off on the weekend

By Rebecca Rempel

If it’s no longer in use, recycle it.

Just in time for spring cleaning, the Loyalist College post-grad public relations students, in partnership with Quinte Waste Solutions and Ontario Electronic Stewardship, held an electronic drop-off Saturday.

The event raised money for Camp Trillium. The results are still to come.

Students in bright orange vests directed vehicles to the rear of trailers where more student volunteers unloaded the used electronics, while the drivers never had to leave their vehicles or lift a finger.

“It’s been insanely busy. It’s crazy to see how people have come out and supported this,” said Chris Barnim, a post-grad PR student and the Loyalist College student government president.

“We could not predict how this was going to go,” said Barnim. “We decided to take the risk and it’s paid off.”

Twenty students, split into two shifts, volunteered their Saturday to help unload electronics.

John Cowan, a second-year radio broadcasting student, volunteered his time after PR students came to his class asking for help.

“I really love helping out with the PR group,” said Cowan. “They do a lot of cool stuff.”

“It’s like going back through memory lane, like remember when that TV used to be \$10,000 and now it’s like \$500 on Kijiji or something. It’s a bit of nostalgia.”

Quinte Waste Solutions will take the donated electronics to Ontario Electronic Stewardship where they will be purchased by weight.

“Our goal is \$1,000 which will send



Photo by Rebecca Rempel

The Loyalist post-grad public relations students in partnership with Quinte Waste Solutions and Ontario Electronic Stewardship, held an electronic drop off in the Zellers parking lot Marsh 10. Volunteers from left to right; Dustin Mahoney, Chris Thompson, Kurtis Leavitt, Josalyn Hilts and Chris Fleming.

‘Some of (the money raised) goes towards the cost from Quinte Waste Solutions for the trailers but most of it goes to Camp Trillium.’

post-grad PR student Chris Barnim

a kid to camp for 10 days,” Barnim said.

By the end of the day, one of the two 53-foot trailers was filled and the second trailer started.

“Some of (the money raised) goes towards the cost from Quinte Waste Solutions for the trailers but most of it goes to Camp Trillium,” said Barnim.

Camp Trillium, created in 1984, holds camps for children with cancer and other life-threatening conditions.

There are two camps in Ontario, one at Oddfellow and Rebekah Island near Sandbanks Provincial Park and one at Rainbow Lake in Waterford. They also offer day camps across Ontario.

Camp Trillium provides “an environment that normalizes relationships and experiences, helping children and their families in the healing process and enhancing their quality of life.”

The programs are funded by donations.

Forty-four different electronic items are accepted by the Ontario Electronic Stewardship including TVs, computers, scanners, cellphones, stereos, print cartridges, iPods and mp3 players, as well as VCR, DVD and Blu-Ray players.

For the disposal of electronic items, contact 613-394-6266 or visit the website at <http://quinterecycling.org/>.

Ospreys coming back early from winter break

By Melissa Murray

Quinte’s ospreys are expected to cut their winter vacation short because of atypically warm temperatures.

Quinte Conservation will be checking the status of the osprey camera at the Quinte Golf and Country Club later this week.

“We need to make sure it’s working and that nothing happened to it over the winter,” said Sarah Midlane-Jones communication specialist for Conservation Quinte.

The camera will go live on March 26, giving viewers the opportunity to tune into the everyday activities of the osprey and their nesting habits. The birds, which have up to a six-foot wingspan, are expected to arrive back to the area early because of the warm temperatures that have spread across the region.

Usually, ospreys are first sighted around April 1, said Midlane-Jones.

“People are fascinated with the birds,” said Midlane-Jones. “Especially since the birds haven’t always been seen in the area.

“People love watching them.”

There are more than 50 osprey nests in the area, said Mary Gunning a Bay of Quinte Remedial Action Plan environmental technician.

The camera, which was installed last year, increased hits to their website by 300 per cent, said Midlane-Jones.

The osprey population took a huge hit in the 1950s and 1960s because of rampant use of pesticides like DDT.

“Ospreys are a good indicator of a healthy habitat. They wouldn’t be here, if the environment didn’t support them,” Midlane-Jones added.

Gunning agreed.

“They’ve been making a comeback,” she said.

Eggs that are laid hatch at the end of May and the fledglings stay nearby until they fly in October.

“It’s an exciting time of year for us because it is when things are starting to happen,” said Midlane-Jones.