

Driving Courteously Wins Glenelg High an Award

Teenagers score the most points in a competition that began in September

By Shelby Prucha-Mitchell
Sun reporter
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When **Robert Sagmiller**, a senior at **Glenelg High School**, signed up for the Campaign for Courtesy on the Road program he "took that to heart."

"It made me think a lot more about my actions," he said. "[A required program magnet] made me stay cool and mellow on the road."

Said **Glenelg senior Kelsey Torano**: "It's a good campaign. People are a lot more careful and use their blinkers more."

Eleven county high schools participated in the program—**Marriotts Ridge** has only freshmen and sophomores—that began in September and ended with last week's announcement that **Glenelg** had won the **Sheldon Award**, the organization's top prize.

Its Web site (www.courtesyontheroad.com) says Campaign for Courtesy on the Road's goal "is to work with local high schools to help educate student drivers about the importance of safe and courteous driving behavior."

"At first, we just had a magnet to try and promote courtesy on the road," said Lisa Morrow, Campaign for Courtesy on the Road's director for outreach and development.

But what started out as a magnet soon expanded to a countywide competition to promote good driving habits.

About 1,200 students signed up for the program, Morrow said. **Glenelg** finished with 245 points, followed by **Long Reach** (227) and **Atholton** (163).

High school drivers were exposed to the campaign when representatives from Campaign for Courtesy on the Road spoke at meetings that students were required to attend to receive a school parking permit. The students were given car magnets with "Spokescar Sheldon" and the words "Follow Me" on them.

Campaign for Courtesy on the Road proposed a friendly competition among the schools. To participate, students had to register their license plates with the program and put a Sheldon magnet on their car.

Campaign workers looked for courteous drivers with the magnet, and each week a driver was awarded prizes and their school points. Participants also could answer trivia and survey questions in the program's weekly e-

notes to earn each school points.

In March, a “**March Magnets**” event was held. Program workers went to each school and counted the number of magnets on each parking lot and awarded points accordingly.

Glenelg will receive a plaque and a lunchtime celebration this month. The celebration will include a disc jockey and a prize raffle.

Morrow said the program’s goal of safer and more courteous drivers appears to be working. The program sent out “**Sheldon report cards**” to allow feedback from the students, and the response, she said, has been positive.

Sarah Groh, a senior at **Mount Hebron High**, said: “It was a good motivation for students to be more aware of their driving habits.”

Meredith Ehrhart, a senior at Reservoir, said she thought the program made a difference. “I’ve seen a lot of teenagers being more careful,” she said.

And even though **Wilde Lake** finished last in the competition, “it’s not because we aren’t courteous,” said **Emily Goldberg**, a senior who said “Sheldon” fell off her car.

Goldberg said the program’s message was felt.

“It was good that the concept got emphasized,” she said.

Morrow said that “Sheldon” was a daily reminder to student drivers to be conscientious.

“Just putting that picture on their car and seeing it on other cars...will affect them,” she said, “like a guardian angel on their shoulder.”

The Campaign for **Courtesy on the Road plans to have more prizes next fall when it begins its second year in the county**. The prize incentives are a major motivator for the teen drivers to continue practicing good driving habits, Morrow said.

“[Teen drivers] have enough negatives with police and tickets,” she added. “We just want to catch them doing something positive.”

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