



# MESQUITE CAMPAIGN SEEKS SAFER STREETS WITH FAMILY FOCUS

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Many events occurred in 2015 that caught the attention of the media and American public, but one significant occurrence went widely unreported. The largest increase in traffic accident fatalities in more than 50 years occurred in the United States. The usual causes, speeding and drunk driving, were involved, but a relatively new danger was having a deadly impact. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, distracted driving played a role in 10 percent of the fatalities.

## The Problem

Taking phone calls, texting, checking email, and watching videos while driving have been added to the typical driving hazards of eating, tending to children, and applying makeup. These unsafe driving habits have increased traffic accidents and the need for innovative programs to help change behaviors. Speed enforcement and engineering designs to calm traffic help reduce accidents, but are limited in their effectiveness. A comprehensive public education program that engages the public and directly targets motorist, passenger, cyclist, and pedestrian behaviors is an essential component of traffic safety.

## The Campaign

Knowing traffic safety personally affects all citizens, the Mesquite City Council directed staff to create a program to

help change the dangerous habits of those who share the road. Staff crafted a program to immediately draw the attention of motorists by including the word "family" in the title. The Drive Like Your Family Lives Here campaign uses a variety of bilingual communications, including outdoor signage, social media, video public service announcements (PSAs), and other methods to remind the Mesquite community about the importance of traffic safety.



City staff introduced the campaign at one of the City's Town Hall Tuesday events, routinely held to educate and involve citizens in a variety of programs. City management, police, and public works administrators shared the three "E's" of traffic safety: engineering, enforcement, and education. At the meeting, the City debuted the campaign's first PSA, "Help Change the Numbers." The program officially kicked off in April, during National Distracted Driving Month, with an extensive messaging campaign.

### The Messaging

Large two-sided bilingual signs with the campaign's logo and website address were installed in medians throughout the City. The same message also displayed on various community-centered electronic marquees and e-billboards at key entrances to the City. Campaign messaging and PSAs are posted on the City's social media platforms, such as Facebook, Nextdoor, and Twitter, and shared at special events hosted by the City. Plus, 500 vehicle decals reminding motorists to Drive Like Your Family Lives Here were offered free of charge in both English and Spanish at City facilities. In less than 48 hours, the supply of decals was depleted and an additional 1,000 were ordered to help meet demand.

### Citizen Involvement

The vehicle decals immediately engaged the public and made them active participants in the campaign. Campaign messaging became mobile. Motorists who embraced the program by adhering decals to their vehicles are now traveling message boards, an often-encountered reminder to Drive Like Your Family Lives Here.

The City's communication and marketing department also directly invited residents to participate in campaign PSAs themselves. The latest video announcement, "Obey the Sign or Pay the Fine," features a family of four with their bicycles who had previously contacted the City to request speed enforcement in their neighborhood. Future PSAs will feature other demographic groups from the community, such as pet owners, motorcyclists, and exercise enthusiasts.

Other active participants in the program are neighborhood crime watch groups who feature the campaign at their meetings with police officers sharing safe driving habits and the hazards to avoid. These and other community groups are helping spread the message that the pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists encountered on a daily basis are more than just other residents. They are someone's family member and could even be your own.

### Special Events

Special events are another key component of the program. The Mesquite Police Department will host a National



Seat Check Saturday. Motorists will have the opportunity to have their child safety seats inspected for proper installation and size for their child's height and weight. Guidance on safe school drop-off and pick-up procedures will also be offered at local schools when students return in the fall. These events and others provide additional platforms to promote the Drive Like Your Family Lives Here message and remind motorists of safe driving practices.

### The Future

Like the success of any educational program, the Drive Like You Live Here campaign will be ongoing, and will incorporate fresh ideas as well as imagery to attract the public's attention. Unique themes targeting strategic audiences and unsafe driving habits have been created for each month of the year. These themes and their messaging will evolve, and a revised marketing plan will be developed to adapt to the community's needs. The Drive Like You Live Here campaign will be a part of Mesquite's long-term public safety efforts. ★

