



News

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Volunteers become victims to save lives

A group of people from across North Yorkshire are to experience life in the limelight this spring with the launch of a series of road safety campaigns to reduce fatalities and injuries on the region's roads.

One family and three individuals who live, work or go to school in the heart of North Yorkshire have volunteered to feature in the campaigns, which will see their faces prominently displayed on posters, billboards, buses and newspapers across the county.

Yesterday (Tues), North Yorkshire County Council and 95 Alive York and North Yorkshire Road Safety Partnership teamed up with RAF Leeming for a photoshoot at the airbase. Casualties were down by 25 per cent last year, the numbers of people killed and seriously injured is at its lowest for twenty years and the aim of the campaigns is to carry on driving them down.

At Leeming the volunteers were pictured in a variety of situations where drivers put themselves most at risk on the roads, notably by not wearing seatbelts and allowing themselves to be distracted. Both scenarios are a major factor in the number of fatalities and injuries caused each year.

However, young area sales manager Kristy Small, 24, who lives in Harrogate but is originally from the Newcastle area, was also made to sport horrendous facial injuries similar to those caused in a road collision.

Fortunately for her, they were purely the work of make-up artists, but she hoped members of the public would look at her damaged face and take heed.

Miss Small, who has to regularly travel between Newcastle and Harrogate, volunteered to feature in the campaign after losing her own grandfather in a road collision almost 40 years ago.

"I wanted to help the campaign because I travel a lot and witness an awful lot of accidents on the roads," she said.

"However, the other reason was because my grandfather was killed while crossing the road, so I very much appreciate the terrible impact road accidents can have.

"My dad was only 13 when his dad died, and obviously it was a long time before I was born, so I never even got to meet him, but his death is still a big part of our lives now. I want people to realise that road accidents happen to real people and have lasting effects."

James and Anna Hare, both 37, from Catton, near Thirsk, attended the photoshoot yesterday (Tues) with their three children, Rosie, nine, Harry, six, and Tom, aged four.

Mr Hare said he was constantly on the road with his job as a land agent, and his wife was regularly ferrying the children around.

"We decided to get involved because we thought it would be good fun, but we also thought it a very important campaign," said Mrs Hare.

"We have known people who have been killed in road accidents and it really hit home how dangerous the roads can be. We do a lot of driving, so we also know how distracting the children can be. They get bored and they fight, so I often fall out with them in the car.

"Hopefully, this campaign will help our children see why it is important they are strapped into the car and sat safely, while helping other drivers realise the dangers of distraction. We hope it can save at least one life."

David Bowe, North Yorkshire County Council Assistant Director of Highways and Transport, said this latest campaign was to highlight seatbelt safety and the need to stay focussed while driving, but other campaigns would be launched throughout the year.

"Still, not everybody is wearing their seatbelts, particularly backseat passengers and children," he said.

"I can't even imagine why a parent would dream of starting a vehicle up without ensuring their children are strapped in, but it happens. We want to change that.

"And people also fail to realise the dangers involved in driving a car and the level of concentration that is required. It is very easy to lose your focus when behind the wheel, but we want to make people think about it more and recognise themselves in this campaign.

"It is all very obvious information, but we hope these campaigns prod people into remembering what they should be doing."

Councillor John Fort, North Yorkshire County Council portfolio-holder for Highways and Transport, thanked the volunteers for taking part.

He said: "I think featuring members of the public in the campaign will have a greater impact and will further our cause.

"These are normal members of the community, involved in normal everyday activities with their cars, so everyone can relate to them.

"We hope people see these pictures and stop and think when they get behind the wheel of a car."

And RAF Leeming Acting Station Commander, Wing Commander Wendy Rothery, said: "This is one of the many initiatives that we have progressed in partnership with 95 Alive, not only to help safeguard our own personnel, but the wider community.

"We were delighted to host this event, but the campaign is very much about improving road safety in the whole North Yorkshire region, so we hope drivers take notice."

95 ALIVE

The 95 Alive York and North Yorkshire Road Safety Partnership is a partnership of local authorities, emergency services and other agencies that have a common interest and duty to reduce the number of people who are killed and injured on the roads of York and North Yorkshire. They have set themselves a target to save an additional 95 lives by the end of 2010. This is over and above the 40 per cent reduction in casualties that is already demanded of them

by Government.