

Douglas County Sentinel **Douglas County, GA**

Car Donated to Driver's Ed Program

by Jennifer Boggs

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The sheriff's C.A.R.E. program moved a step closer to a comprehensive driver's education program after a local car dealer provided a vehicle to be used as a skid car Thursday. John Thornton of Thornton Chevrolet gave the Douglas County Sheriff's Office a brand new Chevrolet Impala to be outfitted for the skid car for a year. The skid car frame was purchased with grant money from the Cobb-Douglas Board of Health. After deputies are trained on the skid car, it will be ready to go to the local high schools for young drivers to gain practical experience in a safe, controlled environment.

Despite its name, the aim of the skid car is not to teach new drivers how to get out of skids, but, more importantly, how to avoid getting into skid, said Training Capt. Butch Adams of the sheriff's office. Dane Pitarresi, owner of SkidCar System, a company that sells driver training equipment to law enforcement agencies, met with training staff this week to teach the workings of the skid car equipment. The skidcar allows the driving instructor to adjust the amount of traction of both the front and rear wheel of the vehicle, duplicating conditions where a driver may lose control of the car, such as rain-slick streets and excessive speed. Unlike other skid training, the skid car can duplicate conditions at a low rate of speed.

Pitarresi, a professional racer for nearly 30 year, said the system provides a "practical way of showing people how they get into trouble and how to avoid it." The driver is in complete control of the car, but, if needed, the instructor can push a button on the system's control panel that will return full traction and allow the vehicle to come to a stop within a few feet. "It enables us to put the driver in an environment where it's possible for them to fail," said Pitarresi. "They can experience what can cause an accident."

According to Pitarresi, one of the major problems, especially with new drivers, is speed. "No one should ever be comfortable with speed," he said, adding that no matter how well a driver handles the wheel of a car, driving too fast can still be a disaster.

Experience behind the wheel of the skid car hopefully will teach new drivers how to be proactive rather than reactive on the road, he said. "A superior driver is a driver who uses superior knowledge to avoid situations that call for superior skill," said Pitarresi.

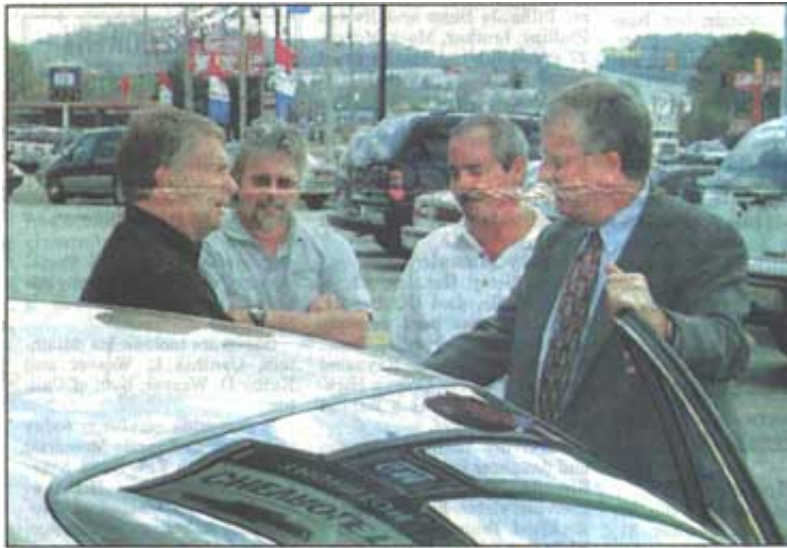
The hands-on experience, along with classroom training, will provide a "full-blown" driver's education program for teen in Douglas County, said Adams.

Thornton, who donated use of the Impala, called the sheriff[s C.A.R.E. (Combined Accident Reduction Effort) Program "a great idea."

Thornton said he had been involved in the driver's education program previously in the school system and wanted to support Miller's plan. "It's a unique program and I think it will be successful," he said.

Miller, who promised to create a driver's education program during his campaign for sheriff, has been busy developing the C.A.R.E. Program, which is aimed at providing new teen drivers with as much road experience as possible to reduce the number of accidents and make the roads safer for everyone.

The program has received a number of large contributions from companies and law enforcement agencies, as the sheriff has promised not to use any taxpayer money to fund the program.



John, Thornton, left, of Thornton Chevrolet talks with Dane Pitarresi, Skid Car System C.E.O.; Capt. Butch Adams, Douglas County Sheriff's Office Training Director and Sheriff Phil D. Miller. Thornton Chevrolet donated the Chevy Impala to be used with the SkidCar System in the Sheriff's, CARE driving training program.

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