

A Brief History of SCDTSEA

The South Carolina Driver Education Teachers and Safety Association started in 1936. The early history of the organization is based upon recollections of memories of various persons; there is no definite documental verification of the herein stated facts. Sgt. Billy Fallaw (later Captain), SCDMV Traffic Safety Education, was an early leader of driver and traffic safety education for South Carolina and the feeling is he was most instrumental in organizing the traffic safety education association.

The South Carolina Youth Traffic Safety Conference was organized in the spring of 1954 in Columbia. This was under the sponsorship of the South Carolina Driver Education Teachers and Safety Association in cooperation with the South Carolina State Department of Education, the South Carolina Highway Department, the American Automobile Association, the Carolina Motor Club, the Five Point Civitan Club, and the Motor Transportation Association of South Carolina, Inc. Adults that gave themselves for successful conferences were Sgt. Billy Fallaw of the South Carolina Highway Department, Mrs. Florence Burch of Spartanburg High School, Ms. Ella Hope of Rock Hill High School and Mr. Jerry Garrett of School District Five Anderson. The initial conference listed delegates from 37 schools. In 1957 Mr. Lonnie L. Dunlap of the State Department of Education joined the other pioneers in giving the much needed adult leadership. The youth organized a Student Safety Association and came up with great resolutions throughout the years, such as the following:

- The finance committee should pass legislation to provide support for driver education. All high schools should have a quality driver education program available to students (1958).
- The “behind-the-wheel” phase of driver education be lengthened to give students more actual driving instruction with a qualified instructor. Each car should have a safety check each year and each driver be re-examined periodically (1959).
- A more rigid driver's examination should be administered by the Highway Department or allow qualified driver education instructors to administer the examination (1960).
- The driver license examiners and the driver education instructors should meet and discuss problems of mutual concern (1964).

- Legislation should be passed to raise minimum age for driver's license to 18, except for those who have completed a state approved driver's education course (1965).
- A master of education degree program should be established at the University of South Carolina for driver education instructors (1970).
- Adequate support, financial, personnel and logistical motivation for teachers of driver education and principals should be ensured by the district superintendent (1971).

Unfortunately the two-day youth safety conferences came to an end because of troubling times and also brought the youth association and conferences to an end.

In 1969, there was a name change of South Carolina Driver Education Teachers and Safety Association to South Carolina Driver and Traffic Safety Education Association. More commercial driver training schools were forming and a constitutional change was made to better represent all teaching in high schools or commercial schools. It reads:

Active members shall be individuals who are teaching or supervising driver and traffic safety education in high schools; commercial driver training school instructors licensed by the South Caroling Department of Motor Vehicles; safety education teachers and supervisors; and college, university, or state personnel working directly with driver and traffic safety education in the state of South Carolina. Only active members and involved active members who have retired may vote and hold office in this organization.

Throughout the years, SCDTSEA has sought to be true to her purposes which are:

- To promote and advance all phases of driver and traffic safety education in K-12 schools, commercial schools, colleges, universities, and the general public in South Carolina
- To promote the solution to the problems that are associated with the teaching of driver and traffic safety education
- To promote cooperation with agencies in the interest of teaching driver and traffic safety to students in the state of South Carolina
- To stimulate general interest in the total problem of the conservation of human life, particularly as related to vehicular and pedestrian safety

SCDTSEA shall endeavor to achieve its purposes through the rational use of such materials, conferences, and dissemination of materials as are necessary to improve teaching in this field, and other activities as may be deemed essential and appropriate.

Some results include working with the safety agencies in South Carolina; instrumental in increasing the high school teacher preparation courses to 12 semester hours; provided newsletters to state driver and traffic safety colleagues and now having a website; coordinated a state Operation Driver Excellence Contest for high schools driver education students (unfortunately Am Vets-Dodge no longer sponsors such a contest); teachers going with students to the National Safety Program Conference for years; lobbying for safety issues like having a texting law; providing a state conference; etc.

SCDTSEA has and continues to serve as representative for driver and traffic safety education, advances the cause of safety and education for all individuals, promotes professional excellence along with the basic importance of the safety educator in the learning process, protects the rights of safety educators and advances their interests and welfare to fulfill an important need: to provide an organization whereby the ideals of good citizenship and driver and traffic safety education may be developed.