



The Newsletter of the Montana Traffic Education Association

# MTEA NEWS

Volume 26, Issue 3

SPRING 2021

## The 2021 Montana Traffic Education Conference is on!

### *Building the Thinking Driver*

Last year's conference was unfortunately postponed due to widespread closures when the COVID-19 pandemic reached Montana. In February, after polling teachers, the MTEA Board determined that an in-person conference was preferred and possible. We decided to keep last year's theme and as many of the scheduled speakers as we could, so that *Building the Thinking Driver* could engage attendees more effectively than in a virtual format.

Here is what you can expect at the Montana Traffic Education Conference this year:

**Sunday, April 25:** After conference registration, and signing up for up to 15 renewal units or one college credit, come outside to put on some goggles and drive a golf cart through a special driving course. Three different goggles can be tried out to see what it's like to drive impaired by alcohol, drugs, or drowsiness.

The conference kicks off at noon with Kansas educator **Will Dunn** featuring the top 20 techniques to activate pupil thinking. This dynamic speaker will then lead a workshop on questioning techniques.

Oregon Traffic Educator **Tim Beckham** returns to Montana to lead a workshop on Engaging the Learner.

Attendees will next choose one of four interactive Roundtables to suggest ways to improve the tests in the OPI's Deadly D's curriculum sub-modules: 6.1 Distractions, 6.2 Alcohol and Drugs, 6.3 Drowsy Driving, and 6.4 Dangerous Emotions. **See page 6 for more information on preparing for the Roundtables and Charlie Brown's Google Classroom workshop before the conference.**

Plan on attending the **Awards Banquet** where we will honor and celebrate the 2021 Outstanding Traffic Education



Teacher of the Year, Traffic Education Contributor of the Year, and retiring traffic educators.

**Monday, April 26** starts off with **Dr. Griff Jones** sharing some new active lessons on the Physics of Car Crashes. Seven years ago Dr. Jones visited our conference where he demonstrated several interactive activities to highlight the dangers of distracted driving.

Rounding out the morning, **Jeff Mead, Warren Clark, Doug Van Zee, and Kim Sorkness-DeCock** will discuss new teacher recruitment and how mentors learn from mentees in the Huff Symposium teacher panel.

**Sergeant Doug Samuelson**, with the Montana Highway Patrol, will lead a workshop on identifying impaired drivers.

**Charlie Brown** from Fairfield will demonstrate a Google Classroom program that can be used for online delivery of course content. **Monday** will conclude with classification meetings followed by dinner on your own.

**Tuesday, April 27** attend a workshop on Crash Ratings & Car Technologies by **Doug Van Zee** from Billings and using car cameras by **Scott Brown** and **Gena Ferlan** from Plains.

Please note that the agenda has slightly changed from prior years. Normally, a 30-minute break for check out was scheduled from 10:00-10:30 a.m. This new format eliminates the break so the conference can proceed directly into the closing keynote on *Creating Growth Mindset* with **Darrell Grogan**.

At 11:00 a.m. attendees can check out, if they haven't already done so. Lunch will be served at 11:10 a.m. so we can get people on the road right after lunch. Don't forget to pick up your renewal units certificate. **See you in April!**

Register now to attend your annual traffic education conference! Bring cohorts and maybe a new recruit to join the ranks of traffic education. Teachers interested in exploring the profession are welcome to attend and get to know other members of the traffic education family. I want to take this opportunity to reiterate that MTEA is a family and it brings me great pleasure to be a part of this caring, sharing and motivating environment.

— *Steffani Grogan (2018-19 MTEA President and 2021 Conference Planner)*

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MTEA News is published by the Montana Traffic Education Association in the fall, winter, and spring. MTEA, PO Box 637, Conrad, MT 59425. Jim Carroll, Executive Secretary, (406) 278-7856. MTEA News is mailed to members and published at [MTEAOnline.org](http://MTEAOnline.org). The spring issue is mailed to all traffic educators in Montana as an invitation to the annual traffic education conference. Submissions can be emailed to: [sgrogan@forsyth.k12.mt.us](mailto:sgrogan@forsyth.k12.mt.us). Articles are due 10/1; 12/1; 3/1.

## MTEA President's Message: *From Tragedy Comes Perspective*



The month of February brought some tragic news as the Billings community suffered four teen deaths in two separate crashes. As traffic education educators, this especially hits home. Our main focus is teen safety and this rocks us all at our core. This tremendous loss reminds us all about our dedication to traffic safety. We are left with asking why.

A lot of our neighbors and friends have suffered this unimaginable loss and it serves as a reminder of why we all do what we do. We appreciate the Highway Traffic System. We promote safety. We love kids. As members of the MTEA, we are dedicated to the following:

- To promote and support Traffic Safety Education in the K-12 and post-secondary schools in the state of Montana.
- To stimulate general interest and awareness of the total problem of the conservation of human life, as related to traffic safety.
- To promote total traffic safety through the rational use of conferences, programs, organizations, and any other activities as may be deemed essential and appropriate.
- To be in accord with the purposes of Traffic Education and in harmony with those purposes of general education.

Embrace the process and keep doing what you all do, it is appreciated!

It is my pleasure to represent the MTEA as your President for the 2020-2021 year and I look forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming spring conference that will be held in person in Great Falls, April 25-27. This issue of *MTEA News* includes details about the conference and pre-registering. We hope you are able to attend. It is always a welcome opportunity to connect with each other, share ideas, and celebrate our successes.

*Doug Van Zee (Billings), MTEA President (2020-21)*



### Getting in the Habit: Buckling Up Every Single Time

How do you help your students remember to buckle their seat belt and make sure all passengers are buckled up, too? What do you think is an effective way to help teens develop this essential, life-saving habit?



MDT's Vision Zero website has some excellent videos that should be shown to all teens taking driver education or about to get their restricted license. This newer video portrays a young driver (with a small boy in the back seat) listing all the reasons he buckles up, **responsibility** being one of them.

<https://mdt.mt.gov/visionzero/people/buckleup/default.shtml>

## MTEA Executive Board Meetings January 24 & February 7, 2021

### January 24, 2021 Board Meeting (via Zoom)

- Minutes, financial reports, and correspondence were reviewed.
- A membership update was given.
- Training opportunities through ADTSEA were provided.
- Summer classes at MSUN were discussed.
- Possible updates to the curriculum were discussed.
- A legislative report was heard.
- The newsletter was discussed.
- A memorial scholarship in honor of Dan Marinkovich was discussed.
- An OPI report was heard, which included the status of hiring a new director, Class IV certification, and tasks underway in the office.
- The spring conference was discussed and included whether or not we would be able to host an in-person conference. It was decided to survey the membership to determine viability and then meet again. The next meeting was set for February 7<sup>th</sup>.

### February 7, 2021—Special Board Meeting (Zoom)

- Minutes were reviewed.
- TOY/COY, service, and retirement awards were discussed.
- A membership update was given.
- The proposed Marinkovich scholarship was discussed.
- An OPI report was given. Dwight Nelson was introduced as the new Traffic Education Director.
- The results of the conference survey were discussed. Our membership overwhelmingly would like to see the conference go forward this year. Discussions about how this would fit within OPI and the Heritage Inn took place.
- Specifics of the conference were discussed as to rooms, speakers, safety protocols, door prizes, awards, silent auction, college credit / renewal units, and meals.

The next meeting was set for April 26<sup>th</sup> at the conference. Anyone having items for discussion should contact Doug Van Zee, President, or Jim Carroll, Executive Secretary, as soon as possible to be included on the agenda.

## 67th Montana State Legislature

*By Charlie Brown (Fairfield)*

The legislative session is in full swing, here are a few tips on contacting your legislator(s).

Go to the Legislature homepage: <https://leg.mt.gov/> to locate your Legislator, a Bill, Committees, and to watch certain committee hearings. Several bills have been introduced in this year's Session that could impact TE. As immediate legislation comes up, MTEA will also try to keep you aware through e-mails or a phone tree.

### Here are some bills we are keeping an eye on this session:

- ⇒ **SB 300**—Allow private driving schools to be approved by OPI and allow parents to provide BTW when teen has completed a state-approved online classroom course and earned a learner license (possibly a temporary COVID-related measure that a district can do, not must do).
- ⇒ **HB 462**—Revise driver license laws for foster children.
- ⇒ **HB 267**—Jordana's Law—revise laws related to approaching and passing stopped school buses.
- ⇒ **SB 150**— This bill would require children under age 13 to ride in a rear seat when available.

A well-written letter/email is one of the best ways to let your legislator know your thoughts and opinions about a particular issue. You can also submit testimony or testify via Zoom during a scheduled public hearing. Here are some tips for getting your message across effectively:

- **Be brief.** Legislators have many demands on their time. They appreciate letters that are short and to the point.
- **Address your letter to a specific legislator or legislators.** Depending on your message, you may want to write to the sponsor of a bill, certain members of a committee, or your own legislators. Don't address your letter to the entire Legislature.
- **Identify bills** by their number, title, and sponsor.
- **Explain your position** on the bill and ask for the legislator's support or opposition.
- **Give any sources of information** that you use to make your point.

**Include your name, address, and a little about who you are** (for example, where you work or what school you attend). If a **"call to action"** message comes from the board or me it means we a few hours up to a day, maybe, to contact our legislators about a Bill. So time is usually of the essence.

Thank you for all you do to promote saving our kids' lives!



## Hope ... this kid will make it!

By Riley C. Ramsey (Hardin and Custer)

I remember most students that I have driven with (as I am sure you all do) and fine details seem to directly come to mind. One girl in particular we can call "Hope" because we HOPE that we make it to our destination in one piece without too much intervention. Hope was very insecure in her new driving venture and demonstrated this by making very unpredictable turns, fast stops, slow times getting up to speed, and very large, questioning eyes.

We have all driven with Hope. Her mom doesn't have the confidence herself to coach her daughter effectively. Her dad works long hours and really has no patience to get in a vehicle for an hour to watch his girl weave around the road. He may be able to fix anything that is broken, but does not have the tools in his belt to help build her confidence on the road; at least not until he sees some improvement in her confidence or speech about driving. Hope's mom and dad are both thinking: "Just let the Traffic Education teacher work with her. It's his/her job to teach her to drive. I don't want to wreck our car. I know she has a learners license; let's let her learn more before we try her out! I am sure the school has a really good insurance policy on their car, mainly for kids like Hope!"

We all have different strategies for working with someone like Hope. We also have the faith that our strategy will help her develop into a competent, careful, observant driver, at least with a lot of practice ... hopefully! We only have, on average, 6 to 12 sessions in the vehicle to get her to a place where we feel that she has the ability to pass a driving test (with us, or in 6 months with just a little more practice with her family) and has the foundation necessary to build a life of successful driving habits.

Let us start simple then, on Hope's level, and we'll see what hope there is of later moving on to the next drive level. We've already gone through the vehicle's basic controls; steering, stopping, and making sure Hope is comfortable and can effectively use the seat and mirrors. And yes, we turned on the headlights! *You know, Hope,*

*the speed limit is 45 here. I am not sure why we are moving at 20 miles per hour. You know, there are cases where going too slow can be very unsafe. I am certain that we covered this. In fact, you got a 100% on almost all of your quizzes, and you always have the right answer when we talk in class. This may not all be verbalized, but we are thinking it. Amazing how some kids do great in class, and need a lot of extra support in applying what they know.*

I have found that a big factor in students getting over some fear of driving is having reached a speed of around 60 miles per hour. I prepare them for the likely thoughts



Heading south on S. Mitchell Avenue in Hardin, Montana, ready to turn onto Highway 313. (Photographer: Riley Ramsey—2016)

they will have-thinking that they are doing something very unsafe, dangerous, or at least uncomfortable. When they are front-loaded, they overcome the feeling more quickly. Then they reach the speed, are able to keep the car straight, and deeply breathe in this new experience level. This scenario forces them to feel safer, because if it is their first time, at least they are with their instructor. I believe some students secretly think we have magic powers to keep the car doing what it is supposed to at any given moment,

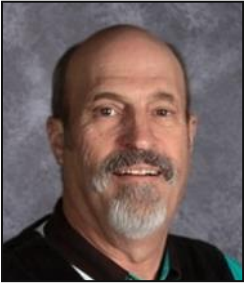
whether or not they decide to effectively utilize the car controls or their natural ability to see out the front of their head. We may occasionally think we have that power, too.

Much can be discussed about the tactical nature and psychology of teaching students to drive, maybe such for another time. I wanted you to know that I have not seen Hope for a while. It has been a few years since I taught her to drive. You see, "Hope" was actually in the aforementioned scenario, with parents that really did not want to drive with her much. She was very inexperienced, even for a kid coming from a small farm town. But, today when I was driving a bus back to the lot, I saw Hope coming around a curve in town, going to school; head up, eyes looking out on the road and good grip on the wheel with both hands. Have patience with Hope. No matter how rough she started out, this kid will make it, too.



## The Positive Aspects of Being an MTEA Traffic Education Teacher

*By Steve Morgan (Hinsdale)*



*As students experience our passion about traffic education and positively embark on this integral life skill, these experiences can become high-water marks in our students' lives as well as in ours.*

**T**raffic Education teachers have an exceptional calling to work with adolescents desiring to obtain a Montana driver's license. There is a high level of personal satisfaction I have received when we as TE teachers assist students in acquiring this essential life skill. With the partnerships teachers develop with parents, there are great opportunities to mitigate the high-risk levels of new novice drivers who participate in our TE programs.

MTEA is at the forefront of Montana's professional educational organizations. There are many seasoned MTEA teachers who are willing to mentor and share materials with new teachers or those who need help with their classrooms/programs. As an MTEA member for many years, I have witnessed and benefitted from the highest level of comradery and professionalism that more experienced teachers bring to the organization. This mentoring results in more effective, engaging, and meaningful instructors for our student clientele. There exists a wealth of classroom and behind-the-wheel lessons which many TE teachers are willing to share when asked.

Engaging students in an out-of-the-normal classroom (*in a motor vehicle*) has led to opportune conversations and experiences which impact students positively. Developing meaningful behind-the-wheel and classroom lessons, which spark student engagement and an exuberant passion for learning, is an equation for successfully impacting our students. As students experience our passion about traffic education and positively embark on this integral life skill, these experiences can become high-water marks in our students' lives as well as in ours.

*Steve Morgan is the Hinsdale School District Superintendent and Traffic Education Instructor. He serves on MTEA's board and was MTEA's President from 2012-2013.*

## Dan Marinkovich (1926-2020)

*MTEA's first president, lifelong learner, traffic education mentor, and gentle force ...*

**D**an Marinkovich was born April 1, 1926 and lived a long and full life until his passing on December 11, 2020 in Missoula, Montana. Dan taught driver education to teens and college students in Miles City, and teens in Anaconda and Philipsburg. He entered the profession in the 1960s, retiring in 2008, but that didn't end his cherished identity as a Traffic Educator. He kept his Montana educator license and his traffic education credentials active, because he so valued the profession and his role in it. In fact, Dan was MTEA's first president in 1967 (and elected again in 1999) and attended almost every MTEA conference since 1976, the year of the first MTEA conference.

Dan's dedication to teaching was wide and varied: he held endorsements in History, Health Enhancement, School Counselor, and Traffic Education. He was a longtime teacher, but also served as principal and superintendent in Anaconda. He also played basketball while a student at the University of Montana and found the time to coach basketball at Custer County High School and Miles City Community College.

Dan brightened the day of all who met him, listened to his stories, and were made to feel special and appreciated by his cheerful and friendly nature. He will be missed, but fondly remembered for his gentle leadership and his desire to keep learning new things.



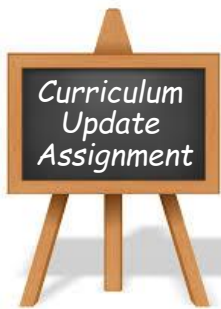
*Visit the Dan Marinkovich Tribute page on MTEA's website to read a wonderful remembrance by former OPI Traffic Education Director, Fran Penner-Ray. If you have a special memory about Dan to share, please use the Contact page at MTEA's website: <http://mteonline.org>.*

## Come Prepared to Engage at the 2021 MTEA Spring Conference!



We are excited to bring you *Building the Thinking Driver*, April 25-27 at the Heritage Inn, Great Falls. COVID-19 health and safety protocols will be in place. Five meals will be included, but will not be buffet-style. Remember, the costs of attending the conference are considered to be an allowable expense for traffic education program costs under OPI guidelines.

Presenters include Kansas educator **Will Dunn**, Florida Physics Professor **Dr. Griff Jones**, Oregon traffic educator **Tim Beckham**, MT Highway Patrol **Sergeant Doug Samuelson**, Trooper **Scott Waddell**, Detective **Keith Perkins**, Forsyth Bank President **Darryl Grogan**. Montana traffic education instructors presenting and/or leading workshops: **Jeff Mead**, **Warren Clark**, **Doug Van Zee**, **Kim Sorkness-DeCock**, **Scott Brown**, **Gena Ferlan**, and **Charlie Brown**.



### PLEASE REVIEW CURRICULUM MODULE 6 BEFORE YOU ARRIVE

On Sunday, four different interactive Roundtables will give you a chance to **improve the tests** in the OPI's Deadly D's curriculum sub-modules:

- 6.1 Distractions**
- 6.2 Alcohol and Drugs**
- 6.3 Drowsy Driving**
- 6.4 Dangerous Emotions**

Please prepare for this session by reviewing the test questions in **one** of the sub-modules in Module 6 of the OPI Traffic Education Curriculum.

If you need a new curriculum flash drive with the tests included, send an email to Patti Borneman at [pborneman@mt.gov](mailto:pborneman@mt.gov) and please include address where the flash drive should be mailed.

### PREPARE FOR THE GOOGLE CLASSROOM WORKSHOP

Charlie Brown will lead a Monday afternoon workshop on using Google Classroom, which will include setting up a class, adding students, grading assignments and quizzes, designing Google forms, setting up assignments, and anything else as time allows. Google Classroom is a great tool to use with students and Charlie asks those who plan to attend to please prepare ahead:



Google Classroom

- Please make sure you have a personal Gmail account that is totally separate from your school account (if you have one).
- Bring your laptop to the workshop.
- This will be a hands-on workshop that gets you on your way to using Google Classroom for your Traffic Education coursework.

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## Outstanding Traffic Education Teacher of the Year Award

Since 1988, the Montana Traffic Education Association has honored an exceptional Traffic Education teacher with an annual teacher of the year (TOY) award presented at MTEA's spring conference. Any active teacher who has devoted a good part of their teaching career to traffic education is eligible to apply. Teachers can self-nominate or be nominated by someone who is familiar with their traffic education work.

Download the two-page nomination form from the website at [MTEAOnline.org](http://MTEAOnline.org) (which includes a section that is completed by the candidate). A TOY committee member will review the application. If the nomination is eligible for consideration, the candidate will receive a letter notifying them of the nomination. For more information, contact Mick Davis at (406) 761-0400.

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## Outstanding Traffic Education Contributor of the Year Award

MTEA recognizes companies, organizations, and individuals who make generous contributions of time, energy, equipment and/or expertise to support and sustain the mission of the Montana Traffic Education Association. To nominate a person or business for this honor, download the COY nomination form at [MTEAOnline.org](http://MTEAOnline.org) and submit to MTEA anytime during the year prior to the spring conference. The Outstanding Contributor/Sustainer of the Year will be recognized at MTEA's spring conference in April.

Examples of outstanding contributors or sustainers are MVD driver examiners who have gone out of their way to assist driver education teachers with their CDTF requirements and needs; car dealerships who have loaned vehicles to local school districts for their traffic education programs, and local experts who have visited driver education classes to share their knowledge about tire safety, distracted driving, and DUI prevention; as well as business development organizations that have funded materials, equipment and learning tools.



# MONTANA TRAFFIC EDUCATION CONFERENCE

## *Building the Thinking Driver*

Great Falls, Montana ~ April 25-27, 2021



*The Montana Traffic Education Association and Montana Office of Public Instruction invite you to the  
2021 Montana Traffic Education Conference!*

Teaching teens how to drive is a big part of what we do, but we also want to cultivate good judgment and get teens thinking about their decisions behind the wheel. The 2021 conference will focus on the “thinking classroom” and active learning, and much more.

**PRE-REGISTER FOR THE CONFERENCE:** All attendees **must pre-register with MTEA by Monday, April 15, 2021**. The registration fee is \$205 and includes five meals. Tear off the registration form below, complete, and mail to MTEA with a check for \$205. **Walk-in registrations are not allowed. Cancellation policy:** Upon written notice of cancellation, \$135 of the \$205 registration fee is refundable.

**BOOK YOUR HOTEL:** The conference takes place at the **Heritage Inn**, 1700 Fox Farm Road, in Great Falls. Room rate is \$96.00 (plus tax) for a single or double room. Attendees will be asked for a credit card to secure a room.

Call the **Heritage Inn** at **(406) 761-1900**. Mention the group name (Montana Traffic Education) to get the special rate. Cut-off for the group rate is **April 9**, so reserve your room early.

**COLLEGE CREDIT OR RENEWAL UNITS:** Register for one semester credit through MSUN at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, April 25. The cost is \$150. Or, you can choose to earn up to 15 renewal units which can be used toward your Montana educator license renewal. **You may register for college credit OR renewal units, but NOT BOTH.**

**SCHEDULE/AGENDA:** Registration packets will be available beginning at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday, April 25. The first general session will begin at noon. The conference ends at 12:00 p.m. on Tuesday April 27. **Conference agenda, speaker bios and other updates are posted at [MTEAOnline.org](http://MTEAOnline.org).**

*Please write clearly on the form below and send with payment to MTEA.*



## 2021 Montana Traffic Education Conference Registration

### HERITAGE INN & CONVENTION CENTER

April 25-27, 2021 – Great Falls, Montana

**You must pre-register to attend.  
PLEASE REGISTER BY  
APRIL 15, 2021**  
Bring an item to give as a door prize!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Birth date\* \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone (Work) \_\_\_\_\_ (Home) \_\_\_\_\_ (Cell) \_\_\_\_\_

Home Mailing Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP Code \_\_\_\_\_

School(s) where you teach \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I would like to register for the MTEA conference and join/renew my membership in MTEA. Enclosed is a check to **MTEA** for **\$205**. \* Birth date is required for MTEA Membership AD&D/Life Insurance

\_\_\_\_\_ I am unable to attend this year's conference, but I want to join/renew my MTEA membership and receive MTEA's newsletter. Enclosed is a check to **MTEA** for **\$45**.

**MTEA USE ONLY**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Check No. \_\_\_\_\_

Received check from:  
\_\_\_\_\_

Amount \$ \_\_\_\_\_

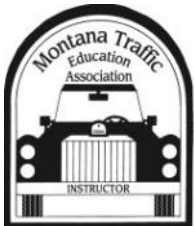
The conference registration fee does not include the college credit fee.  
The cost for the one semester hour of credit is \$150 and must be paid to MSUN at the conference.

- MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO: **MONTANA TRAFFIC EDUCATION ASSOCIATION** or **MTEA**
- MAIL TO: **MTEA, PO Box 637, Conrad, MT 59425**
- QUESTIONS? Call Jim Carroll at **(406) 278-3285** (days) or **(406) 278-7856** (evenings)



Montana Traffic Education Association  
PO Box 637  
Conrad, MT 59425

*Return Service Requested*



*Building the Thinking Driver*

## 2021 Montana Traffic Education Conference

April 25-27, 2021—Heritage Inn, Great Falls

### CONFERENCE REMINDERS:

- **Book your room by April 9**
- **Register by April 15—See registration form and details in this issue!**
- **Gather up your silent auction items and door prizes, bring with you!**
- **Prepare for the Roundtable discussion and Google Workshop ahead of time.**
- **Travel safely to Great Falls. We'll see you soon!**



The 2021 ADTSEA conference will be held July 25-28 in Knoxville, Tennessee. The conference will provide you with a wealth of information and an opportunity to network with other professionals from across the United States. Remember, MTEA has a scholarship program that will provide up to \$500 per person to offset conference costs. If you can't attend, consider joining your national organization.

Conference details: <https://www.adtsea.org/driver-ed-events.phtml>.