



## COVID and Where Do We Go From Here?

By Susan Carney, Arlee

What a year it has been! There have been a lot of ups and downs, for sure, in our personal lives and in Traffic Education. I think the biggest one that has impacted us all is how we teach our students and how we approach this new challenge during COVID times. This is not just at the high school level, but at the college level too, where teachers receive the essential training to become state-approved traffic education instructors.

We have all spent the last 9 months figuring this out and trying to make the best out of the restrictions caused by the Coronavirus. And we are trying to head in the best direction possible for our high school students. One thing I know for sure is that online instruction is not ideal. While it can help as an instruction aid, there is no replacement for students engaged in-person in our classroom. Some students do very well with online instruction, but many kids fall way behind. As a teacher, I found it super hard. Many of my lessons involve getting students up and moving with me, instructing and observing them for independent learning that mirrors what I am looking for in good drivers. This just does not happen at home via a computer.

Another huge COVID impact we experienced was the lack of training of new traffic education instructors. While I struggled with the total cancellation of MSU-Northern's

traffic education courses last summer, there was nothing we could do since all the on-site courses were cancelled at the Havre campus. It was unfortunate that 20 or more teachers who could have been trained to enter the traffic education profession were unable to do so.

These issues were the reason that I decided to personally dig deeper into being better at my job. I decided to become trained as a traffic ed instructor in Oregon. No, I am not moving there to work! It was an opportunity to see how they can still train during a pandemic and improve my own teaching. I had some great takeaways from this experience: new tips and techniques, better understanding of concepts, and some great people that I know will be part of my Traffic Ed family for life. It wasn't always easy, but reflecting back on this experience, it was well worth it. I discovered that learning online is just as bad for them as it is for us. Online is not the answer, but it allowed some teacher training to continue on a temporary basis. The problem with temporary solutions is that they can become the norm and that concerns me greatly.

This training and the issues we are facing with COVID have sparked new talks with MSUN to see how we can make up the deficit from last year's loss and how to continue forward. Stay tuned for what those talks bring.

## COVID Guidance from the OPI Traffic Education Office

The OPI's Traffic Education Office continues to receive calls from teachers and school districts asking if traffic education can be taught remotely. The answer is YES. Montana is currently in a very high state of alert with the spread of COVID-19 and we need to find solutions that don't compromise the quality of driver education. That being said, when districts are able to offer remote classwork (with the proper assessments), they still need to manage the in-vehicle, behind-the-wheel instruction so that there is minimal contact between all occupants of the driver education vehicle. For BTW instruction to be safe right now, districts need to:

- do a quick health assessment at the beginning of each drive (taking temps, if possible);
- require face masks for ALL occupants in the vehicle, including the driver;
- sanitize all surfaces;
- take frequent breaks between drivers when everyone can get out of the car, catch their breath, sanitize their hands, and get some fresh air flowing in the vehicle.

If you still aren't sure how to proceed, consult with your school nurse and county health department. And be sure to visit <http://opi.mt.gov/Re-opening-Schools> for guidance and resources. For questions specific to traffic education, contact Patti Borneman at [pborneman@mt.gov](mailto:pborneman@mt.gov) or call (406) 444-4432.

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## MTEA President's Message: Doug Van Zee

*Hello Fellow Traffic Ed Instructors,*



### *Season's Greetings!*

My name is Doug Van Zee and I am the current President of MTEA. This newsletter is being sent to you because either you are a current member, you have been an MTEA member in the past, or you are a state-approved traffic education teacher who we hope will consider joining MTEA.

It was unfortunate that we had to cancel our annual conference last Spring, so the MTEA is reaching out with this newsletter to remind you of our great professional organization in Traffic Education.

It is our goal to provide you exceptional local and national resources to aid in your delivery of Traffic Education in Montana. We encourage you to become a member and take advantage of the many benefits of the MTEA. Our board is currently finalizing plans for the annual conference to be held in Great Falls April 25-27.

Checkout details on our website: <http://www.mteonline.org>

*See you all in the Spring!*



## WE WANT YOU AS A MEMBER!

*Are you a traffic education teacher in Montana who has yet to experience the benefits of membership in the Montana Traffic Education Association?*

*Turn to pages 4 and 5 where President Doug Van Zee and Secretary Jim Carroll describe in detail why your membership is a good investment and contributes to a strong traffic education program throughout the state.*

*Start the new year as an MTEA member and enjoy belonging to one of the most dynamic professional organizations in the region!*

## MTEA Executive Board Meeting Summary—November 15, 2020

Here's an overview of the last Executive Board meeting held November 15th in a virtual format:

Main topics decided included:

- Minutes, correspondence, and financial reports were reviewed.
- Various reports regarding membership, board positions, president-elect, and insurance were given.
- Legislative planning was discussed.
- The newsletter and MTEA website were discussed.
- Progress on TE classes at MSUN and/or satellite sites was discussed. Teacher recruitment and retention was also discussed.
- An OPI report was provided. This included progress on hiring a new TE director, progress on Class IV licensing, MT DRIVE, and a legislative update.
- Representation at the MDT Unrestrained Occupant Protection meetings was discussed.
- A request for an update on TE teacher salaries was discussed.
- Curriculum review, online training, and professional liability were discussed. This included a discussion on updates to Curriculum Module 7.
- Teacher and Contributor of the Year Awards and retirements were discussed.
- Planning for the 2021 MTEA conference took place, with many speakers and break-out sessions already organized. Most of the agenda planned previously is still intact and will likely only need minor modifications.
- Door prizes and the silent auction were also discussed.

The next meeting was set for January 24th. 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.

### President-Elect Congratulations!

The results of our balloting show that **Mike Kincaid** of Missoula is our new President-Elect. His term will start at the spring conference and he will serve until 2022. Congratulations, Mike!

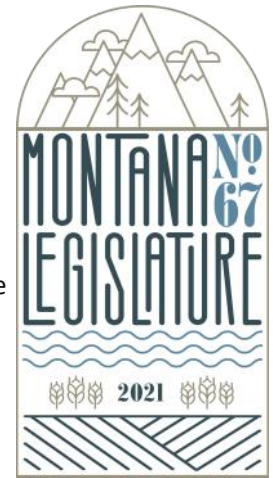
## 67th Montana State Legislature begins January 4, 2021

The upcoming Legislative Session will commence January 4, 2021. If you have time to visit with your local representatives and senators, you are encouraged to discuss with them any issues surrounding traffic education (funding, access, training, recruitment, COVID concerns, etc.).

The official website for the Session can be found at <https://leg.mt.gov/> where you can find a wealth of information about how to contact your legislator, monitor bills, hearing schedules, and much more. You are encouraged to become familiar with the site.

MTEA will again be monitoring the Legislative Session for anything that specifically could affect traffic safety and education. Should we need additional help with letters, phone calls, or testimony, MTEA will utilize a phone tree approach to notify you of any critical issues. If you are contacted to help, please do so. Individual voices coming from many places in Montana carry much weight. Your opinion is used by your local legislator to help him/her make decisions that affect us all.

Coordinating the efforts this year will be Charlie Brown (legislative liaison) and Jim Carroll (executive secretary). If you hear of any issues of concern, please feel free to contact either Charlie or Jim. Our efforts in the past have netted us success in seeing issues surrounding funding, the Cooperative Driver Licensing process, and Graduated Driver Licensing law come to fruition. You are encouraged to take an active role in keeping Traffic Education strong in Montana.



*Drive Safe Missoula* was developed by the Missoula City-County Health Department in coordination with Missoula County's DUI Task Force and

Buckle Up Montana Coalition. They focus on DUI prevention, seat belt safety, child passenger seats, and other traffic safety concerns.

Steve Schmidt is the Senior Community Health Specialist who runs Drive Safe Missoula, along with "superheroes embedded throughout our community." Contact Steve at (406) 258-3880 or email [sschmidt@missoulacounty.us](mailto:sschmidt@missoulacounty.us). And visit [www.DriveSafeMissoula.com](http://www.DriveSafeMissoula.com), a great resource for any driver education class.

# Why should you become a MTEA Member?

## MTEA President Doug Van Zee gives you 7 good reasons to join!

**1. Networking** – Connecting with like-minded professionals is a great way to open up doors. You never know who you might meet at our next social event. Our annual conference is typically held in April.

**2. Stay Up To Date** – MTEA sets industry standards and pushes the limits of our field. By staying involved, you'll learn about the latest and greatest trends in Traffic Education. What you learn at meetings and through organizational publications can be a total game-changer.

**3. Expand Your Craft** – It's important to broaden your knowledge base. The more you learn about your field of interest the better you will be at your job.

**4. Motivation** – It's inspiring to see what other professionals in Traffic Education are doing. Tap into their knowledge and projects so that you can expand your ability to do your job.

**5. Professional Development** – MTEA gives you access to courses, national organizations, lectures, seminars, certification options and other educational opportunities so that you can continue to develop as a professional.

**6. Mentoring** – One of the best ways to learn the industry and the business is with the help of a mentor. MTEA can help to arrange mentorships for aspiring professionals like you.

**7. Perks & Benefits** – Most people think that perks and benefits only come from their employer, but they are wrong. MTEA encourages participation in national and regional traffic education conferences and will help with the costs of attending those events as well as providing an annual award to three first-time attendees of the Montana Traffic Education Conference.

Other membership benefits are:

- Three newsletters per year.
- \$5,000 AD&D/life insurance policy.
- Voting status.
- Awards eligibility.
- A voice in the ongoing improvement of drivers education and professional development of Montana's traffic educators.



**WE WANT YOU  
AS A  
MEMBER!**

## MTEA Membership

### Join or Renew Today!

Because membership dues are usually paid with conference registration and our 2020 conference was postponed, please maintain your individual MTEA membership so the Association can continue to stay strong, plan for next year, and also provide you with the benefits you've come to appreciate as part of your MTEA membership.

New members are always welcome! This issue of MTEA News is being mailed to all currently active state-approved traffic education teachers in addition to our current membership. We are reaching out to recruit new members and hope you will consider joining us! For more encouragement, read Jim Carroll's companion article on the next page.

If you need to renew your membership, please download the membership form at [MTEAOnline.org](https://www.mteaonline.org) and send with your \$45.00 dues to MTEA's address on the form.

If you have any questions, contact Jim Carroll, Executive Secretary, at either (406) 278-7856 or (406) 289-0208. Thank you for your support!



# All about the Montana Traffic Education Association

By Jim Carroll, MTEA Board, Executive Secretary

**MTEA is a professional organization made up primarily of teachers and other individuals who are interested in the purposes of traffic education. MTEA has close to 200 active members and interested individuals from across Montana and the northwest region.**

The purposes of our organization are many, as outlined in our Constitution and Bylaws. They include:

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

MTEA is active in the legislative process and monitors safety legislation in regard to traffic education. MTEA publishes a newsletter for all its active members and supporters. MTEA has an active awards program that recognizes outstanding educators, program supporters, and longevity in the teaching field. MTEA provides \$5,000



of accidental death / dismemberment insurance to each paid active member.

MTEA is led by an elected president and appointed executive board made up of various individuals with safety and traffic education backgrounds. The executive board meets 2-3 times yearly to plan for the annual conference and to discuss issues of safety on behalf of the

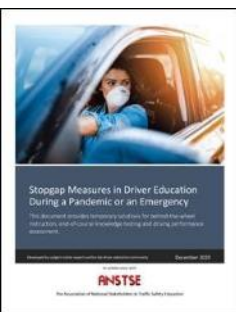
MTEA.

The annual conference is held in late April or early May of each year at sites that rotate around the state. The conference brings together instructors and others interested in traffic safety for workshops geared to provide up to date information on what is happening in the field. Local, state, and national speakers are utilized.

As with any professional organization, we seek out other individuals and organizations that speak to some of the same issues we do. Support for our organization is provided through individual and corporate membership. We also accept materials to be given away on an organization's behalf, as long as those materials fall within the purpose of MTEA, as outlined in the above purpose statement.

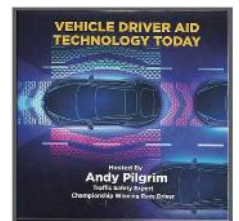
## New Guide Provides Stopgap Measures during a Pandemic

The Association of National Stakeholders in Traffic Safety Education has announced the release of a guide entitled, **"Stopgap Measures in Driver Education During a Pandemic or an Emergency."** This document provides temporary solutions for behind-the-wheel instruction, end-of-course knowledge testing and driving performance assessment during a pandemic or an emergency. The document can be downloaded from the MTEA website, Resources webpage. *This is not an endorsement of the measures, but a resource to provide some possible solutions to the issues we are facing in the traffic education world these days. Contact the Traffic Education Office at the OPI with questions about adopting any of these measures.*



## New Video from Andy Pilgrim's Traffic Safety Education Foundation

Andy Pilgrim through his foundation, has produced numerous traffic safety education videos and PSAs since 2012. These educational productions are currently used in classrooms by thousands of driver education teachers all over the U.S. His newest traffic safety education production is called **Vehicle Driver Aid Technology Today**. It is now available to teachers in DVD form or by download at <http://tsef.org>. The new "Driver Aid Technology" DVD, plus his other educational DVDs, are available to order at no cost, plus free shipping at the same website.



## Against All Odds, Montana DRIVE Persisted

By Patti Borneman, Traffic Education Program Specialist, Office of Public Instruction

It was February 2020 and registration for our Montana DRIVE summer workshops opened to adult drivers. The popular advanced driving workshop offered every summer since 1979 at a state-of-the-art facility in Lewistown runs from the first week in June until the end of the first week in August, with a week off in July. We schedule just 12 drivers per day for nine weeks.

Registrations started coming in for the adult workshop. Registration for the teen workshops would begin in late March as soon as word that an annual State Farm Insurance grant had been awarded to fund the teen workshop scholarships.

Then, in March we started hearing about a devastating virus that had arrived in the U.S. and was spreading across the country. School closures and shelter-in-place orders were announced. Conferences and large meetings were cancelled or postponed, including the Montana Traffic Education Association conference that was scheduled in late April. The June gathering of school bus drivers was cancelled. Montana State University Northern at Havre also cancelled its summer courses, including the essential training that teachers needed to become state-approved traffic educators.

Montana DRIVE registrations continued to come in, while at the same time we received cancellations. We didn't

know until late May if OPI would give the green light to go ahead.

Protocols needed to be put in place to ensure the safety of participants and instructors, and once that was done and it was determined that the small numbers of people meeting each day at the remote location would fall under the State of Montana COVID-19 guidelines, we sent out the good news that Montana DRIVE would be open for business.

We pushed back the start date to June 15, rescheduling drivers who had booked a workshop in early June. And our Montana DRIVE staff got busy. We ordered cleaning supplies, hand sanitizer, and face masks and published the Health and Safety Protocols that would be followed all summer. In the end, the program succeeded in training 341 adult drivers, which included 142 school bus drivers, 17 transit bus drivers, 36 EMTs, 25 firefighters, 17 individuals, and the rest from state agencies. During Teen Week in July, we trained 48 teen drivers who traveled to Lewistown from all across Montana.

It was another great workshop season, despite the chaos caused by COVID-19. Due to the professional dedication of our Montana DRIVE instructors, a program focused on safe driving was also a safe place to visit in 2020. We look forward to the 2021 Montana DRIVE summer workshops!



## OPI Seeks Traffic Education Director

The OPI is seeking qualified applicants for the position of Traffic Education Director. Applications (resume and supplemental questions) must be received by **December 20**. Please visit the OPI website for details (<http://opi.mt.gov/Educators/Teaching-Learning/Employment>).

The Traffic Education Director is responsible for novice driver education delivered in public schools and advanced driver education delivered by the traffic education unit. This position requires the ability to analyze fiscal resources, make decisions, develop strategic plans and resource allocation, coordinating people and resources to best meet local and statewide needs. Efforts to improve traffic safety and reduce crashes rely on driver education to provide the foundation for students to develop the knowledge and skills to become safe, competent drivers. Duties include program and curriculum development, administration and implementation; staff management; grant writing; and understanding the structure of state and local government and the Montana State budget process.

The successful candidate should be able to balance multiple tasks while demonstrating accuracy, attention to detail and perseverance. Display leadership and organizational ability by developing effective relationships with others and skill in representing the agency and department as a good partner with intra-and inter agency groups. This position acts as the state's expert on traffic safety education and exercises authority and leadership statewide under applicable laws, rules and regulations to the education community, other agencies and the citizens of Montana within broad policy guidance and direction established by the Office of Public Instruction.

Please direct questions to OPI Human Resources, [opipersonnel@mt.gov](mailto:opipersonnel@mt.gov), (406) 444-2673.

## Plan ahead for the 2021 MTEA Spring Conference!



While we all wished we could have participated in the 2020 conference, this was not to be this year, due to concerns about the Coronavirus that is currently affecting many Montana communities. The decision was made by MTEA's board to postpone the conference and make plans for next year. As of right now, the 2021 spring conference is scheduled to be held April 25-27 at the Heritage Inn in Great Falls. Look for more details as the year progresses and on the MTEA website. Remember, costs of attending the conference are considered to be an allowable expense for local program costs under OPI guidelines.

### **Building the Thinking Driver Conference** **Scheduled Keynote Presenters:**

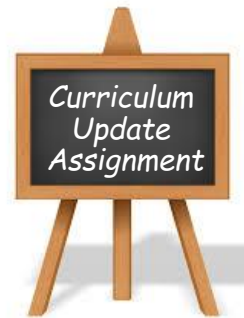
- Kansas educator **Will Dunn**
- Great Falls traffic educator **Jennifer Wasson**
- Florida Physics Professor **Dr. Griff Jones**
- Oregon traffic educator **Tim Beckham**
- MT Highway Patrol **Sergeant Doug Samuelson**
- Forsyth Bank President **Darryl Grogan**

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.**

We are also planning 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**
- 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 the curriculum, contact the OPI for a flash drive. ***Come to the conference ready to suggest improved test questions for Module 6!***



## 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 CDTP 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.

See the long list of past awardees on the MTEA website!



*From all of us at MTEA ...  
Here's wishing you and yours  
a very merry holiday and a  
happy, healthy and safe New  
Year!*

## Outstanding Traffic Education Teacher of the Year Award

### ***Nominations are being accepted for the 2021 Award***

Do you know a traffic education teacher who has taught driver education in Montana for many years, has volunteered for MTEA in one or more capacities, and has shared their knowledge, time and ideas to increase traffic safety in their community? You might know (or be) the ideal candidate for MTEA's annual Outstanding Traffic Education Teacher of the Year (TOY) 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 MTEA TOY Committee Chair, Mick Davis at (406) 761-0400.



Montana Traffic Education Association  
PO Box 637  
Conrad, MT 59425

*Return Service Requested*

**It bears repeating! Plan ahead for the Montana Traffic Education Spring Conference — Gather your Door Prizes and Silent Auction Items!**

MTEA buys door prizes with the proceeds from our 50/50 drawings, but we can always use more items. Consider asking at least one business in your community to donate a door prize or silent auction item. Bring your prizes and auction items with you when you arrive at the conference. *Details about the conference inside.*

Our silent auctions are a huge success because of the great gifts donated and your generous bidding on them. The proceeds raised will help fund the David Huff Scholarship and conference prizes and giveaways.



**Pacific Northwest Driver & Traffic Safety Conference**

If you are looking for another great regional TE conference, the Pacific Northwest Driver & Traffic Safety Conference is a good choice. This conference is typically held the beginning of March in Portland, Oregon. As of right now, they are planning on a virtual conference for next year. Check out the following website for more information: <http://triwou.org/projects/tse>



American Driver & Traffic Safety Education Association

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>.