

Addyson Hearon

## Safer Roads Lead to Safer Lives

A sixteen-year old is legally too young to buy sharpies, get a lottery ticket, go to the theater to watch a rated R movie, or even vote for their own political welfare. Why is it that an adolescent who is limited on so many accounts is allowed to get behind the wheel of an operating vehicle, that in so many cases also becomes an unintended murder weapon? I know it is an unpopular opinion to restrict the sixteen-year olds even further; however, I believe that the age requirement should be heightened from at least sixteen to eighteen.

Everyday I hear the same, hackneyed words from my mom: “Be careful. It’s not you that I am worried about; it’s all of the other reckless drivers.” When put into perspective, no one wakes up believing that they are going to be involved in a fatal car crash or hit-and-run that day. In the blink of an eye, a person’s entire life and future can be altered.

It’s not at all fair of me to say that every life-threatening accident occurs at the hands of a teenage driver, but I do know that most adolescents, including myself sometimes, feel invincible. With a mindset so audacious, the fear is slim and the risk is high. It isn’t until the moment where a sixteen or seventeen-year old is involved in their first crash that the high and mighty, invincible exterior begins to deteriorate, and oftentimes that moment is too late. All it takes is one wrong turn and the minor who is driving will live with the consequences for the rest of their life. Even statistically, according to the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety, adolescents between the ages sixteen and seventeen have the highest recordings for automobile crashes, involving injuries or fatalities. I mean, when a person is behind the wheel, regardless of age, they are responsible for everyone in the car and anyone they encounter on the roads. At the young age of sixteen, I feel like most new drivers don’t quite understand the peril and jeopardy that can result from cruising the streets.

As a seventeen-year old myself, I consciously ponder the risk that I am putting myself and my two younger sisters in every day. When I am constantly chauffeuring them around to their various events, I know in my heart that I could never live with myself if something horrific happened to them because of me. I’m also sure that many teenagers who find themselves guilty of causing a wreck where someone they are closely related to dies, that juvenile will never feel the same again.

Although the physical maturity may be present at the age of sixteen, the mind still remains underdeveloped, as most are unable to grasp the gravity of driving a vehicle and the consequences of not paying attention.