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There are an endless number of safe-driving campaigns held each year that remind us on how we can practice safe driving each time we get behind the wheel. I believe that one reason why there are so many safe-driving campaigns is because there are still so many needless deaths each year that are caused by unsafe/distracted driving. However, at the end of the day, the road stops with each of us to take personal responsibility to drive safely.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), approximately 38,000 people die each year in the United States due to distracted and/or drunk driving. Unlike many fatal diseases or illnesses, deaths from unsafe/distracted driving are completely avoidable. Drunk driving, looking at your phone, texting, eating, speeding, ignoring bad road conditions, overdue car maintenance, elderly drivers who drive when they are no longer able, or just not paying attention, are all actions that are 100% within a driver's control to avoid each and every time they get behind the wheel. Is there any hamburger, text, or party more important than a human life? I don't believe so.

Practicing safe driving starts with changing habits and accepting personal responsibility. Several best practices for safe driving include turning cell phones completely off and placing them in a glove box or purse so they stay completely out-of-sight, thus avoiding the temptation of using them to read a text, check emails, or answer calls. Also, taking the time to stop and eat, either inside a restaurant or just in your car in the restaurant parking lot after going through a drive-thru, is always best. Trying to unwrap food, not spill things, and eat going down the road is a recipe for disaster. Finally, changing/rotating tires, regular oil changes, maintaining ample gas levels, etc. help avoid break-downs on the side of the road, thus increasing the chances for an accident. NHTSA statistics show that at least 68% of Americans know when something is wrong with their car and know they should fix it.

Safe-driving campaigns are important reminders to us all on how we can make a difference and save lives every day. Safe-driving does not require a special medicine, expensive clothes, or even the skill of being a professional race-car driver. It requires taking personal responsibility and thinking of others rather than just our own immediate, selfish needs and wants. Let's all take the time to drive our grandmother or elderly neighbor to the grocery store or hair appointment, wait to answer texts and emails until we have reached our destination, and keep our cars in good working order. These small things are truly what will make the biggest difference when it comes to ensuring safe driving.