

## Let police keep an eye on teen drivers

By Tom Greenwood, Detroit News

If you're the parents of a new teenage driver, you'll find today's column to be especially interesting.

Sooner or later, your teen is going to drive off by himself or herself, leaving you behind with your worries about how responsible the new motorist will be behind the wheel. You can't monitor their driving, but there are others who can.

The Michigan Sheriffs' Association, the Michigan Secretary of State and AAA of Michigan have teamed up to announce the expansion of their STOPPED program (Sheriffs Telling Our Parents and Promoting Educated Drivers) to the majority of Michigan's counties.

What is STOPPED? It's a program in which parents are notified by police via letter that their teen has been pulled over because of risky driving behavior. Parents simply register their vehicle online at [www.michigansheriff.com](http://www.michigansheriff.com) and a STOPPED sticker is mailed to their home to be placed on the vehicle's windshield.

The sticker serves as a reminder to new drivers to act responsibly while behind the wheel and that should they be pulled over by police for any reason, their parents will receive a letter regarding the incident. The letter includes the time, place, number of passengers, reason for the stop and whether or not a citation was issued.

The notification feature makes parents aware of any potential problems and enables them to enforce rules they have set regarding teenage driving privileges. STOPPED -- which was piloted in seven Michigan counties in 2005 and has since been expanded to more than 60 counties -- seems to be working.

"Of nearly 1,600 vehicles registered in the program, there have been no reported accidents or injuries," said Jack Peet, manager of Community Safety Services for AAA Michigan.

"In addition, there were only three letters that needed to be sent to parents. That tells me the teen drivers are seeing the sticker and thinking twice about taking unsafe chances they might otherwise take when it comes to driving."