



**Independent, locally owned and operated!**

www.lamorindaweekly.com 925-377-0977

Published August 27th, 2014

## Orinda TSAC Takes on Distracted Driving

*By Laurie Snyder*

The slow drift. The sudden veer. Most adult Orindans have had more than their fair share of whoa-inducing commute moments after which they've silently thanked BMW for their cars' responsive steering systems. Many, like Orindan Mark Roberts, will tell you their instant, gut reactions - the instigators of their particular incidents were distracted while texting or talking on a cell phone. Roberts currently chairs Orinda's Traffic Safety Advisory Committee, and recently reported that research done by his fellow TSAC member, David Libby, and others nationwide seems to bear this out. According to [Distraction.gov](http://Distraction.gov), a National Highway Traffic Safety Administration website, "Texting is the most alarming distraction because it involves manual, visual, and cognitive distraction simultaneously. Sending or reading a text takes your eyes off the road for 5 seconds. At 55 mph, that's like driving the length of an entire football field, blindfolded. It's extraordinarily dangerous."

What worries Roberts and Libby even more are statistics proving that reckless, distracted driving is worse than "just" being dangerous for adults. It's the number one killer of American teens. The Virginia Tech Transportation Institute reports, "A quarter of teens respond to a text message once or more every time they drive," and that 20 percent "admit that they have extended, multi-message text conversations while driving." These statistics become even more concerning when you learn that the institute has further shown that, "Engaging in visual-manual subtasks (such as reaching for a phone, dialing and texting) associated with the use of hand-held phones and other portable devices increased the risk of getting into a crash by three times."

As a result, said Roberts, "We unanimously passed a resolution at the committee's Aug. 18 meeting recommending that the Orinda City Council adopt the Impact Teen Drivers program." With support from NHTSA, the California Department of Traffic Safety and other partners, the nationally respected initiative (<http://impactteendrivers.org/>) has helped, since its inception in 2007, to educate more than two million teens across the U.S. regarding the dangers of distracted driving. TSAC members hope to bring the program to Miramonte High School this coming academic year in a workshop format that will be convenient both for parents and teens. Created in 2006 by the Orinda City Council to address community concerns relating to traffic safety in the community, TSAC members are all Orinda residents, who have been appointed by the council and contribute their time as volunteers. Most often known for their work with groups of Orindans to assess traffic safety issues in specific neighborhoods, they typically issue recommendations to the council regarding traffic calming solutions ranging from awareness campaigns to the installation of improved signage or speed bumps.

At a minimum, if TSAC members succeed in bringing the Impacting Teen Drivers program to Orinda, more than one tragic death may well be averted.

To learn more about volunteering for an Orinda commission or committee, visit the city's website: [www.cityoforinda.org](http://www.cityoforinda.org), or contact Orinda City Clerk Michele Olsen: [molsen@cityoforinda.org](mailto:molsen@cityoforinda.org).

Reach the reporter at: [laurie@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:laurie@lamorindaweekly.com)

[back](#)

Copyright © Lamorinda Weekly, Moraga CA