



New awareness: TIGS student Olivia Wallace and Brendan Gilmore of Shellharbour Anglican College with Shellharbour Rotarian David Hooper. Picture: Picture: ANDY ZAKELI

Crash course a vital lesson

By MICHELLE WEBSTER

GETTING behind the wheel of your first car isn't just liberating and exciting, it's also a huge responsibility.

That is the message 2200 students from high schools between Bulli and Kiama will hear this month when they take part in The Rotary Youth Driver Awareness program.

RYDA's Illawarra chairman David Hooper said the program targeted Year 11 students to reach a mix of learner and provisional licence holders.

The idea wasn't to shock students, but to help open their eyes to the possible consequences of dangerous driving behaviour.

"They hear the stories of survivors, people who are brave enough to get up and tell the kids how a crash has changed their lives," Mr Hooper said.

"They also see a police video which is very confronting in many ways, they don't see any accidents but they do get to see the effect it can have on the whole community," Olivia Wallace, 17, of The Illawarra Grammar School, found the impact on those left behind was the most sobering image of the day.

"I realised just what an effect it can have on your family and that you're actually driving a lethal weapon," she said.

"It was very confronting, especially when the officer said that she couldn't go

TOP DRIVING TIPS

- Keep your focus - avoid using mobile phones, eating, drinking and smoking, and adjusting vehicle settings.
- Before driving at night check your lights and turn them on when it starts to get dark (use the street lights as a general guide.)
- If someone dazzles you with their high beam, slow down, move towards the left of your lane and lower your eyes to the road. If you can't see where you're going, stop.
- Slow down in the wet, steer and accelerate smoothly, turn lights on and look out for water on the road.
- Try to avoid driving at times when you would normally be asleep, take regular breaks and always monitor the early warning signs of driver fatigue.

to another fatal crash, it made me realise just how traumatic it must be."

Shellharbour Anglican College student Brendan Gilmore, 16, said he was shocked by a stopping distance demonstration designed to highlight the impact of speed on braking.

In the past 12 months 114 drivers aged 25 and under have died on NSW roads.

The RYDA course began this week and will continue throughout November.