



25th Anniversary of Safe Driving Programs in North Carolina!

July 1, 1989, is a very special date in the history of the Safety and Health Council of North Carolina. It is the exact day when traffic offenders cited for infraction offenses (e.g. speeding, improper passing) in Mecklenburg County could choose to go to class instead of court. In 1989 District Attorney Peter S. Gilchrist, III, approved the SHCNC's Safe Driving Program that provided an incentive for drivers to spend four hours in the National Safety Council's DDC-4 class in return for no court appearance and a reduction on the original violation. The reduction meant no insurance points or driver's license points for one traffic citation in a three year period.

Two and a half decades ago District Attorney Peter Gilchrist instituted the Safe Driving Program to help lessen the traffic court dockets and free time up to prosecute more serious crimes. Twenty five years later the Safe Driving Program not only still exists, it is offered statewide—from Murphy to Manteo—through 35 participating community colleges and the approval of 25 district attorneys. Today, the processes may be different but the insertion of an educational component into traffic enforcement is alive and well.

Defensive driving saves lives, time and money. It is simple. Practically every motor vehicle collision should never have happened if the drivers did everything reasonable to prevent it. This is what is taught in the 4-hour, 8-hour, and Alive at 25 Defensive Driving Courses. These are core principles in our programs.

Getting a traffic ticket can be an eye-opener—a reality check when our driving may have slipped due to bad habits and complacency. Although “accidental” injuries and deaths that are prevented by driving defensively are nearly impossible to measure, helping **955,925** drivers learn valuable lessons in the classroom and not on the road has surely made a positive difference! Thank you, Mr. Gilchrist, for having the vision and dedication to improving highway safety while helping the public negotiate an overburdened court system.

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