

Young driver scheme puts Amy's career back on track

Matthew Reason

newsdesk@essexchronicle.co.uk

FOR ASPRING vet Amy Phillips, 16, getting over her fear of cars is a must for her prospective career path.

After being hit by a car three years ago, Amy, of Springfield, Chelmsford, did not want anything to do with cars for some time.

But young driver's schemes, such as the one held at the Sandon Park and Ride bus terminal near Chelmsford, offer young, and sometimes nervous, drivers the chance to get to grips with driving in a controlled environment.

For Amy this has meant overcoming her fears and getting well on the path towards passing her test.

"Only a few weeks ago I thought I would never learn to drive. This is my second time here and it's a really big help," she said.

"I feel a lot more comfortable in the car now and you get to know your driving instructor which really helps.

"I was hit by a car while riding my bike. Ever since I have been extremely nervous around cars. I want to be vet and a car is definitely something you need to do that.

"I think I will feel far safer on



SAFETY: Claire Fry member of DICE and one of the organisers the roads when I turn 17 in July.

Schemes like this have been set up all over the country, with one at Earls Colne, near Halstead, running for more than seven years.

Drivers aged 16 to 19 can learn the basics of car control and manoeuvres without the need of a licence and with a fully qualified instructor.

They receive a 15 minute 'shock tactic' safety briefing along with 45 minutes of driving tuition.

The safety briefing is presented by Essex County Council and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (FRS).

"Young drivers make up one in three of all road traffic collisions," said Russell Durant, 51, a

■ Sessions must be booked in advance and cost £25 per person, people are encouraged to attend more than one session and parents are welcome to stay or just drop their kids off. Sessions last for approximately an hour and are available at 9.20am, 10.20am, 11.20am, 12.35pm, 1.35pm and 2.35pm. Pre-booking is essential.

Participants will be able to try hands-on activities which highlight the risks and responsibilities of driving including practical sessions, from qualified driving instructors using dual controlled cars, as well as listen to presentations from officers from Essex Highways and Essex County Fire and Rescue Service.

Go to www.sandonyoungdriverscheme.co.uk for more information and for the booking form.

crash reduction advisor.

"We show them reconstructions of real life accidents to give them an idea of the danger."

Amy's instructor, Phil Matthews, 53, is chairman of the Driving Instructor Club Essex (DICE)

which runs the scheme. "Amy is doing really well. The scheme definitely really helps and can give the nervous drivers a lot more confidence," he said.

Tommy Price, 16, of Hatfield Peverel, took to the wheel for the first time with driving Instructor Claire Fry, of CM Driving School, when the Chronicle visited last month.

"Living in a rural area means I am always relying on my Dad for lifts. I want to pass my test as soon as possible after I turn 17 in December," he said.

"The safety briefing beforehand was quite shocking and I can see how it will help."

Tommy's dad, Tony Price, 61, is looking forward to his son repaying the favour of the many lifts over the years.

The young driver's scheme is held at Sandon Park and Ride, Chelmsford, on the second Sunday of every month, excluding December. It aims to help educate teenagers about driving in the hope that this will go on to reduce accidents and fatalities.

DICE even has a qualified instructor who can teach deaf or hearing impaired students.

Janice Jones, 48, who teaches these students, said: "It's important people realise that a lot of disabilities can be catered for."



CONFIDENCE: Phil Matthews with his young student Amy Phillips

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