

Class can help older drivers

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Editorial |

One of the simplest ways to increase your safety on the road is to wear a seat belt, yet according to a recent survey only about half of the respondents age 60 or older said they buckle up while they are a passenger in the car.

Susan Solo, coordinator of the Mid-Western Traffic Safety Coalition at the Carroll County Health Department, wrote in a column in the Times this week that of those surveyed, 86 percent of drivers age 60 or older said they wore a seat belt while driving, but the percentage dropped to 52.3 percent when they were passengers in a vehicle.

The survey was part of the 2008 Elder Health Needs Assessment. It was conducted by the Partnership for a Healthier Carroll in collaboration with the Elder Health Workgroup.

As Baby Boomers age, more and more older drivers are on our roadways. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, there were 31 million licensed drivers age 65 or older in 2007, a 19 percent increase from 1997. According to the CDC, an average of 500 older adults are injured every day as occupants of motor vehicles.

Wearing seat belts, along with altering driving habits to be on the road at safer times, such as daylight hours and not during rush hour traffic are among the things that older drivers can do to reduce their risks, according to the CDC.

The Mid-Western Regional Traffic Safety Coalition also sponsors AARP Driver Safety classes for older drivers. Over the next few months, the classes will be offered at Carroll Hospital Center and at senior centers in the county.

Taking the four-hour refresher class is a good way to gain knowledge and information about how to reduce your risks on the road.

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