

### OUT & ABOUT

By Gayle VanVooiren, Mascot Editor



Too many young lives were lost across our state of Minnesota over the last week. Car accidents claimed the lives of 10 youth, with several more now recovering from their injuries.

What a tragic time for so many families.

Driving a vehicle is a right of passage — an independence that young people feel immediately. But with that independence, comes responsibility.

No one thinks they are going to have an accident. But when one is behind the wheel, there is always the chance of a miscue on your part or on the part of the vehicle that is coming at you.

There is so much power at your command when you are driving. With that power comes danger, and young drivers don't realize the many possibilities.

A passed book test and driving test don't automatically mean one is ready to hit the road. Maybe another factor that has to be realized is experience.

Only parents who have been with their youth drivers know how good, or bad, a driver is behind the wheel. Are they easily distracted, do they drive a little too fast, are they overly confident? All these things must be taken into consideration.

Other issues include cell phone use and texting, which have become big problems. Punching in a number and talking on the phone are distractions while one is driving.

It just shouldn't be done.

And how about the number of passengers? Young drivers are complicating their skills when a carload of teenagers are with them. The fun of the moment can suddenly turn tragic.

And then there's the issue of alcohol and drugs. While

both are illegal for our teenagers, the privacy of a vehicle can be a death chamber.

Parents, it's time to get tough with your youthful drivers. Teach them respect and responsibility, and take away the keys when poor judgement has been used.

Help to keep our youth, and our roadways, a safer place.