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Learning to drive safely

70 ft. trailer brings lessons to you

By LOIS EVEZICH

Teens and adults can learn to concentrate while they are driving by using the Simulator, a 70-foot mobile trailer with 14 Dell Computers and special software, for practice. Older folks can refine their skills as well to keep their focus while operating a vehicle. Michael Vanca is the co-owner Here's how he describes the Simulator and how it works:

Q: What is the Simulator?

A: The Simulator is 70-foot tractor trailer rig outfitted with 14 Dell Computer driven workstations with state of the art simulator software, a Parent/Educator Learning Center with two more Dell workstations, large flat panel video screens, and a full Multi Media Control Room for events. It has a 180" big screen theater that is controlled from inside. The truck is a Kenworth T2000. Fully self contained, we can pull into a school or event, and be ready for students in under an hour.

Q: What is the name of the program?

A: The Simulator Teen Driver Education.

Q: How much did it cost to build the trailer?

A: Approximately \$500,000 dollars.

Q: Is it privately owned, and if so, who is the owner?

A: Metro City Group

Q: What kinds of driver skills do teens learn on the Simulator?

A: Teens learn the importance of concentration during driving and defensive driving. The students understand that driving is a serious responsibility not to be taken lightly.

Q: How does it work? Is there a rating given to each driver?

A: Up to 14 students can use the Simulator simultaneously. Each student has their own personal computer, digital monitor, Logitech steering wheel, and pedals. Headphones and fully adjustable black leather chairs complete the workstation. We do not rate each student, however after the simulation, an evaluation lets the student see how many times the speed limit was exceeded, how many improper lane changes, any hazardous driving, and a few other items.

Q: Who is the teacher or facilitator who leads the group? What credentials does he or she have?

A: We have a couple of facilitators, but the Simulator program was designed to be able to be used with a minimum of interaction between facilitators and users.

Q: How long do students stay at their workstations?

A: The time varies. It really depends on the event and number of students that would like to go through the course.

Q: Does the company also get requests for adult groups?

A: Although we have primarily focused on the new or upcoming teen driver, the Simulator can be used by any age group. We would really like to join with the AARP and help their members utilize the Simulator and our technology. Our best drivers have been two elderly gentlemen, both in their seventies, at two different events, and one had never been on a computer before.

For information about the Simulator's schedule for this year, go to www.streetsimulator.com. Our email address is info@streetsimulator.com.