

Governor DeWine Releases New Educational Tool to Prevent Distracted Driving by Teens

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)— Ohio Governor Mike DeWine and the Ohio Traffic Safety Office (OTSO) today released a new educational video for use by parents, teachers, and driver education instructors to help them explain the dangers of distracted driving to teens.

The light-hearted video is targeted toward youthful drivers and features a pair of young hosts answering the distracted driving questions that instructors get the most.

"This new educational video uses a light touch to engage young drivers on this incredibly serious topic," said Governor DeWine. "By using young drivers to deliver this message, we hope the important safety lessons stay with Ohio's teenagers every time they get behind the wheel."

According to the Ohio State Highway Patrol, there have been more than 69,000 distracted driving crashes in Ohio since 2017, including 2,060 fatal and serious injury crashes. In 40 percent of these incidents, drivers were between the ages of 15-24.

"Reducing crashes on Ohio roadways is one of our top priorities," said OTSO Director Felice

Moretti. "With more distractions now than ever before, it's important to teach our young drivers that the road demands your attention when you're behind the wheel. This video demonstrates that point in a creative and engaging way."

Ohio traffic laws include several penalties for driving distracted:

- * In Ohio, distracted driving is considered a primary offense for drivers under 18, which means that teens can be pulled over if a law enforcement officer sees them using their mobile device in any way.

- * Drivers who are cited for distracted driving face a fine of \$150, and teen drivers face an additional 60-day license suspension.

- * An additional \$100 fine can be levied for distracted driving if it occurs during the course of committing a moving violation. The additional fine can be waived if the offender attends a distracted driving education course.

The new distracted driving video will officially be unveiled tomorrow at the Ohio State Highway Patrol's booth at the Ohio State Fair. You can also watch the video on the Ohio Department of Safety's YouTube page.

The new video is another step in Governor DeWine's comprehensive plan to improve the safety of Ohio's roads. In 2019, he directed the Ohio Department of Transportation (ODOT) to put focus on improving the 150 most dangerous intersections in the state. To help address unintentional motor vehicle crashes, which are one of the leading causes of death for teenagers and young adults in Ohio, Governor DeWine also launched the "Ready, Test, Drive!" virtual driver assessment program to more accurately assess new drivers' road readiness and help identify skills needing improvement. In 2020, Governor DeWine formed the Ohio Traffic Safety Council to coordinate and monitor all statewide safety initiatives; launched a new work zone traffic enforcement plan in coordination with ODOT and the Ohio State Highway

Patrol; and awarded grants to juvenile courts to help them give young drivers more access to advanced driver training.

Earlier this year, Governor DeWine also announced an increase in Ohio's yearly funding allocation for local bridge projects by \$47.5 million for the next five years and announced an investment of \$51 million into new traffic safety improvement projects to address an increase in pedestrian-involved traffic crashes and fatal roadway departures on state and local roads.

OTSO, a division of the Ohio Department of Public Safety, focuses on a mission to save lives and reduce injuries on Ohio's roads. Last year, OTSO awarded over \$31 million in grants to be used for projects such as traffic safety education, enforcement, and engineering.



First Lady Fran DeWine Hosts Cooking Class & Book Reading for Kids at the Ohio State Fair



First Lady Fran DeWine helps kids at the Ohio State Fair as they make their very own pizza.

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio First Lady Fran DeWine cooked pizza with kids and read an Imagination Library book today at the Ohio State Fair to promote Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio.

First Lady DeWine hosted two hands-on cooking demonstrations. Children took turns grinding wheat, while she talked about how wheat can be used in making pizza dough and other food. Kids then rolled out their own pizza dough and added toppings, including some vegetables from the garden at the Ohio Governor's Residence. While the pizzas cooked, the First Lady read "The Little Red Hen" to all of the kids, and afterward the kids ate their pizza with the First Lady.

"I love cooking with kids at the

Ohio State Fair, just like I do with my grandchildren often. It's fun to watch them make their own creations, as we talk about where their food comes from," said First Lady DeWine. "I also really enjoy reading to young kids. The more we all read with children, and help them discover a love for reading, the more they benefit as they get ready for kindergarten."

To promote Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio, First Lady DeWine hosted a book reading for kids at the Ohio Department of Commerce's fair booth, "The Commerce House."

The Commerce House at the Ohio State Fair represents all the different ways the Department of Commerce is able to protect Ohioans as they make important decisions in their life, from investments to purchasing a home. The living room, kitchen, and bedroom are filled with resources for consumers.

First Lady DeWine read "The Very Hungry Caterpillar" and "Shh! Bears Sleeping" alongside Ohio Department of Commerce Director Sherry

Maxfield. And she encouraged all little ones to sign up for the Imagination Library if they aren't already enrolled.

Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio mails one age-appropriate book to enrolled Ohio children each month until their fifth birthday. The program is free to Ohio families. In August, 327,743 children will receive their monthly book, which means 45% of eligible children are enrolled in the program.

Parents and guardians interested in enrolling their child in the Imagination Library program can visit <https://ohioimaginationlibrary.org>.



First Lady DeWine, Governor DeWine, and Department of Commerce Director Sherry Maxfield pose with kids at the fair after a book reading to promote Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Ohio.

Governor DeWine Announces Expanded Eligibility for Utility Assistance Program

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Ohio Governor Mike DeWine today announced that more Ohioans are now eligible for electric and natural gas assistance from the Ohio Department of Development and Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO).

This afternoon, Governor DeWine signed Executive Order 2022-12D, which authorizes the Ohio Department of Development to work in partnership with PUCO to implement emergency rules that increase the income threshold for Ohio's Percentage of Income Payment Plan (PIPP). The threshold will change from the current 150 percent of the federal poverty level to 175 percent. The Ohio Department of Development has jurisdiction over PIPP for electric service, and PUCO has jurisdiction over PIPP rules for natural gas service.

"With the rising costs of commodities, Ohioans are finding it harder to pay their utility bills," said Governor DeWine. "By expanding eligibility for utility assistance programs, more Ohioans will get the help they need to pay their

bills and keep their homes cool in the summer and warm in the winter."

PIPP helps eligible Ohioans manage their energy bills year-round. Utility payments are based on a percentage of the monthly household income and are consistent year-round. Customers that make their payments on-time and in-full may have the balance of their bills eliminated.

The new income levels are:

There are approximately 4.5 million regulated electricity customers and 3 million regulated natural gas customers in Ohio.

An overview of available energy assistance programs, can be found below on the Governor's website. PIPP eligibility, enrollment, and other assistance program information is available on the Development's website by visiting energyhelp.ohio.gov.



Governor DeWine Celebrates the Opening of the Ohio State Fair by Welcoming a New Playground and Planting a Tree



Governor DeWine Celebrates Opening Day at the Ohio State Fair. Governor DeWine, First Lady DeWine, Lt. Governor Husted, and Second Lady Husted cut the ribbon celebrating the opening day of the 2022 Ohio State Fair.

(COLUMBUS, Ohio)—Today, Ohio Governor Mike DeWine, First Lady Fran DeWine, Lt. Governor Jon Husted, and Second Lady Tina Husted celebrated the grand opening of this year's Ohio State Fair.

"It is so good to be back at the Ohio State Fair, it's very, very exciting," said Governor DeWine. "The fair offers us 12 days to come together and celebrate the great state of Ohio and everything we have in common."

Following a cabinet meeting at the fairgrounds and the celebratory ribbon cutting ceremony, Governor and First Lady DeWine joined members of their family to enjoy the sights and sounds of the fair and to sample the fair's signature food selection.

Governor DeWine and his family also joined Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) Director Mary Mertz to celebrate the official opening of the new Exploring Oil and Gas in Ohio accessible play area at the fair's Natural Resources Park.

"The Natural Resources Park offers a slower pace for families to learn about our state's resources," said Governor DeWine. "This new play area not only teaches children about the oil and gas industry, but it gives them a fun way to stretch their minds and work out their energy while enjoying the state fair."

ODNR consulted with Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities to create this accessible space that all visitors can enjoy.

"We know how important play is to children of all ages and abilities and this new addition to our park offers amazing and low impact entertainments for kids at the state fair," ODNR Director Mertz said. "All visitors will enjoy learning about mineral ex-

ploration, transportation and production while our youngest guests cantake a break from the midway to run and wiggle."



Governor DeWine and First Lady DeWine plant a bur oak tree with their grandkids at the Ohio State Fair.

In keeping with tradition, the Governor also planted a bur oak tree in the Amphitheater at the Natural Resources Park at the Ohio State Fair on Wednesday evening. Governor DeWine has planted a tree at the Natural Resources Park each year that he's been Governor.

"I am honored and excited to continue the tradition of planting trees at the Ohio State fairgrounds," said Governor DeWine. "All the trees planted by governors in the past contribute to the health and well-being of all Ohioans by providing shade, improving air quality, and creating wildlife habitat."

The diverse species of trees planted in and

near the amphitheater over the years helped the Natural Resources Park to become an official arboretum in 2015. With more than 100 species represented, the park is designated as a Level II-accredited Arboretum through the ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program.

To conclude the day, the DeWines and several of their grandchildren stayed at the fairgrounds to spend the night in a yurt at the Natural Resources Park.

For decades in Ohio, many Governors have chosen to follow the tradition of spending the night at the Ohio State Fair.

Governor DeWine, First Lady DeWine, and several of their grandkids sit outside of their campsite in the ODNR Natural Resources Park.

The ODNR Natural Resources Park is in the southeast corner of the fairgrounds and is open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. daily during the Ohio State Fair. All the activities in the park are free with admission to the Ohio State Fair.



Governor DeWine and Family Overnight at the Fairgrounds