



'Rookie Driver' designation taking off

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GRAND HAVEN -- Corinne Fortenbacher turned her nervous energy about her teenage son driving into a business and an effort to help others.

She founded the website rookiedriver.net after her own bad experience shortly after her son, Austin, got his driver's permit. "A semi came up behind us and was right on our tail, and (Austin) was looking in the rearview mirror and I said 'It's OK, you're doing everything fine,'" she told 24 Hour News 8. "But he said 'That guy's right on me,' and I'm like, 'It's OK.' Then the guy beeped his horn at him, and he turned around and I said, 'No, no, keep your eyes on the road. You're doing fine.'"

Once she got home, she looked for online help and found nothing cool enough for Austin to agree with her. So they came up with Rookie Driver. Austin said the catchy phrase and hip design makes the sign on the car less awkward.

Corinne said parent concerns have boosted sales and helped spread the word. Mentions in Newsweek magazine and the Chicago Tribune didn't hurt, and she now has orders from 44 states and Canada.

AAA statistics show Michigan teen fatalities decreased nearly 25 percent since 1997. But in 2006, there were more than 120,000 teen accidents, 327 fatalities. Most teen accidents happen between 3 p.m. - 6 p.m., and 61 percent take place on city and county roads.

"No one can eliminate accidents," she said, "but parents can take every safety measurement possible."

On the Net:

[Rookie Driver](http://rookiedriver.net)



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