

GTA Young Drivers launch winter driving story contest

By Tabitha Wells

Winter driving in this part of Ontario can be nerve-wracking, especially if you are unfamiliar with the potentially treacherous conditions or have not had proper safety training.

In order to counter the lack of education, GTA Young Drivers (YD) of Canada has decided to launch a Winter Driving Story contest for January.

Angelo DiCicco, general manager of GTA Young Drivers, explained the idea was developed when no one really paid attention to December's National Safe Driving Week.

‘The uptake and the interest in the media was focused on other things, like Rob Ford, and very few people were talking about Safe Driving Week,’ he said. ‘So we came up with this contest to raise awareness for safe driving in the winter, and refreshing people's memory. Almost everyone needs a refresher at the beginning of the year because winter is not going to just go away, not yet anyway.’

The contest is open to anyone aged 16 and older and rewards the grand prize winners with free access to an online winter driving tutorial on the new YD winter driving website, a free educational classroom component, and free in car lessons valued at \$399. The in-classroom program covers everything from skid prevention and control, ‘how to drive in snow, what to do if you hit black ice, how to use your ABS brakes properly and more.

‘The rules of the contest are such that anyone who participates will have access to a three hour online tutorial free of charge,’ added DiCicco. ‘All they have to do is submit either their scariest or funniest winter driving story. It doesn't matter whether they are a pedestrian, a cyclist, a passenger or even a driver.’

While the contest is being run by the GTA branch of Young Drivers, those outside the GTA are eligible to win if they are willing to take the courses at one of the GTA locations. To enter the contest, all drivers have to do is submit either their funniest or scariest winter driving tale.

‘I had one student submit a story about how the week before Christmas, he and his buddy laced up their skates and were skating up and down their street because it was that quiet and icy,’ DiCicco explained. ‘So that was a pretty cool story. And if nothing else, it tells drivers to be prepared for people to be skating up and down a street in extremely icy conditions.’

The contest runs throughout January and three grand prize winners will be selected at the end of each week.

‘This is my 28th year with Young Drivers of Canada and I've been the director of the GTA for 18 years now,’ DiCicco said. ‘What I'm finding is there are more and more people who are less and less competent with their winter driving skills.’

He added that a rather large contributing factor to the decrease in skilled winter drivers could be the advances in modern technology in cars. Things like all wheel drive and ABS braking controllers make people feel safer and like their cars can handle more, so people are pushing the limits of speed and safety in the snow.

‘They don't seem to be as cautious with safety rules like keeping space between themselves and the vehicle in front and acknowledging the ever-changing road conditions,’ he said. ‘That's why I'm launching this campaign ? just to get the word out that if you're going to live in Canada, you better get used to the snow because it's not going away for a while.’

To enter the contest, visit www.ydwinterdriving.com/contest

For more information on Young Drivers of Canada or how to sign up for one of their courses, visit www.yd.com