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The Enlightener

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Lightbulb Winners

Congratulations to this month's lightbulb winners:

- ▶ Dannie Nelson
- ▶ Carolina Olivas
- ▶ Gary Esplund
- ▶ Larry Feikert
- ▶ Mary Kaltenbach
- ▶ Darren Konrade

Contact us today for your free lightbulbs!



Nondiscrimination

This institution is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Support Mental Health in Rural America

The value of sharing lived experiences

Throughout many parts of the country, an increased understanding of mental health has led to enhanced awareness of its importance. A catch-all description of emotional, psychological and social well-being, mental health affects how people think, feel and act, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

In fact, mental health is an important component of overall health. However, in some instances, there remains a gap between understanding mental health and embracing solutions, particularly in rural areas.

"When my 28-year-old nephew died by suicide in a farming community where mental illness was a subject never discussed, my mother courageously announced 'Enough is enough. We are going to talk about



this, and we are going to talk about this in detail," said Jeff Winton, founder and chairman of the board of nonprofit Rural Minds.

His commitment to confronting suicide and mental illness in rural areas supports the goal of the organization, which is to serve as an informed voice for mental health in rural America and provide mental health information and

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LABOR Day
Office Closing

In observance of Labor Day,
our office will be closed on
MONDAY, SEPT. 5.

Support Mental Health in Rural America *Continued from page 12A ▶*

resources. A major barrier to individuals seeking help in rural communities is the stigma often associated with mental health challenges. The organization is working to confront the stigma through people talking about their personal, lived experiences with mental illness.

Recognizing the value of sharing deeply personal accounts of mental illness is also the message of Jeff Ditzenberger, a farmer who attempted suicide. His own challenges confronting and managing his bipolar II disorder while returning to farming motivated Ditzenberger to found TUGS, a mental health nonprofit with the mission to address the stigma surrounding mental health challenges and suicide.

Passionate about normalizing discussions about mental illness, Ditzenberger is working with Rural Minds to encourage others in rural areas to talk about their challenges with PTSD, bipolar disorder, depression, schizophrenia or other mental issues. The goal is for people to become as comfortable with the discussion of mental health as they are talking about COVID-19, the common cold or the flu.

Mental health professionals agree that opening up about mental health challenges can be the first step to finding a path forward.

“Sharing the burden of mental illness and life experiences can be really, really powerful,” said Dr. Mark A. Fry, consultant in the Department of Psychiatry and Psychology at Mayo Clinic. “As a psychiatrist, I would tell you it’s a critically important part of the overall treatment plan. In my opinion, the concept of providing peer support — sharing lived experiences with mental illness and supporting each other — really is invaluable.”

Barriers to Seeking Mental Health Support in Rural Areas

While mental health is imperative for overall health, some people do not recognize mental illness as a disease; rather, it is sometimes perceived as a character flaw or personal weakness.

“Mental illness is an illness — just like cancer or diabetes,” Winton said. “Just as it is with many other diseases, the person who is ill is not responsible for getting the illness. Much of the stigma around mental illness may be rooted in the misdirected and unfair shame that can be an added burden for someone who is already suffering with a mental illness.

“Similar to many people in rural America, I grew up on a farm and was taught to pull myself up by my bootstraps and get over it, to just move on and to not think about it. Well,

that is not an acceptable response to a mental illness. You don’t do that with other illnesses. You can’t do that with mental illness.”

Collaboration is Key

In the spirit of collaborating to better serve the mental health needs of rural America, Rural Minds is partnering with The National Grange, a family, community organization with roots in agriculture that was founded in 1867.

“Our aim in collaborating is to develop a grassroots, person-to-person approach to provide people who live in rural communities with mental health and suicide prevention information by working with local Granges, civic groups and community leaders across the country,” Winton said.

Help is Available

There are several established organizations that provide mental health information and services across the country, but Rural Minds focuses entirely on confronting the mental health challenges in rural communities.

Find a compilation of free mental health crisis resources and support and overall mental health resources and support at RuralMinds.org, which also offers access to recordings of educational webinars presented by the organization.

Share the Road

School days bring traffic congestion, especially as everyone figures out their new morning schedule. Be kind and take precautions when sharing the road.

Young Pedestrians

- ▶ The National Safety Council states most children who lose their lives in bus-related incidents are 4-7 years old.
- ▶ Stop and yield to pedestrians crossing in the crosswalk or at an intersection.
- ▶ Don't block the crosswalk when stopped forcing pedestrians to go around you and potentially into the path of moving traffic.
- ▶ Be alert, children are unpredictable.

School Buses


- ▶ When driving behind a bus, allow greater following distance. It will give you more time to stop once the yellow lights start flashing.
- ▶ It is illegal in all 50 states to pass a school bus that is stopped to load or unload children.
- ▶ If the yellow or red lights are flashing and the stop arm is extended, traffic must stop.

Bicyclists

- ▶ When passing a bicyclist, proceed slowly and leave 3 feet between your car and the cyclist.
- ▶ When turning left and a bicyclist is approaching in the opposite direction, wait for the bicyclist to pass.
- ▶ Watch for bicyclists turning in front of you without looking or signaling, especially children.

Utility Vehicles

- ▶ The Move Over and Slow Down law in Kansas requires drivers to vacate the lane closest to a stationary utility or emergency vehicle if possible or slow down to a safe speed for weather conditions.
- ▶ Driving too fast or not moving over can endanger a lineworker elevated in a bucket truck by causing the bucket to move or sway and endanger lineworkers on the ground.



Save a Life: Avoid Distractions While Driving

Some temptations are hard to resist, whether it be the last piece of chocolate cake or binge watching your favorite show.

While driving, we typically hear that “ding” on our phone, alerting us to a text or call coming through, and we sometimes feel the urgent need to check it. We know we shouldn’t, but we reason that we’re going to make an exception — just this once.

So, why do we indulge in behavior we know to be wrong, dangerous and in many states, illegal? Call it hubris. According to AAA research, most people feel they are better-than-average drivers. After all, we have busy lives and are accustomed to multitasking. But mounds of research and thousands of deaths every year prove otherwise.

August is Back to School Safety Month. As a new school year begins with young drivers and school buses back on the road, I thought it would be a good time to remind folks, including myself, of the dangers of distracted driving.

The reality is that using a phone while driving creates enormous potential for injuries and fatalities. Distractions take a motorist’s attention off driving, which can make a driver miss critical events, objects and cues, potentially leading to a crash.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, one of every 10 fatal crashes in the U.S. involves distracted driving, resulting in more than 3,000 deaths annually. This statistic is

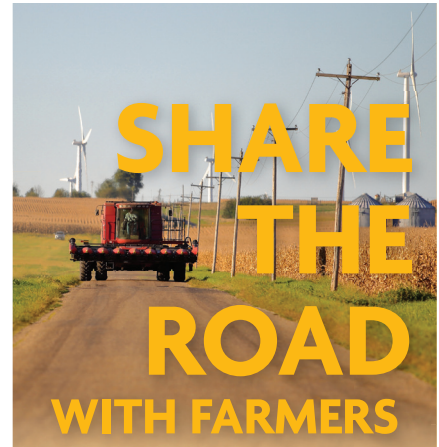
especially heartbreaking considering so many of these accidents could easily be avoided if we’d simply put down our phones while driving.

Distracted driving is considered any activity that diverts our attention, including texting or talking on the phone, and adjusting the navigation or entertainment system. Texting is by far one of the most dangerous distractions. Sending or reading one text takes your eyes off the road for an average of 5 seconds. At 55 mph, that’s like driving the length of an entire football field with your eyes closed.

In addition to refraining from texting while driving, we can help keep the roads safe by moving over for first responders and other emergency vehicles. Additionally, if you see utility crews conducting work near the roadside, I’d encourage you to move over when possible and give them extra space to perform their work safely.

At CMS Electric, safety is foremost in everything we do — for our employees and the members of the communities we serve. We routinely remind our crews of the dangers of distracted driving, and we hope you’ll have similar conversations with your teens who may be new to the roadways and are especially susceptible to the lure of technology.

Let’s work together to keep everyone safe on the roads. Remember: that text can wait and waiting just might save a life.



Farming season means sharing the road with large farm equipment, which can be wide and slow. Public roads are often the only way to get from point A to point B.

When you find yourself following or meeting large farm equipment on the road, take a deep breath and do the following to keep everyone safe.

1 Be alert and cautious, and give farm equipment and other slow-moving vehicles space.

2 Do not pass in a “No Passing Zone,” or where it is not safe to do so, such as intersections, bridges and railroad crossings, among others.

3 Make sure the tractor is not trying to make a left turn before you pass on the left.

4 Do not tailgate. Following too closely means you could be in the operator’s blind spot.

5 Be careful when you do get the chance to pass. Oftentimes, farmers will move their equipment over when it is safe for them to do so.

SOURCE: TEXAS TABLE TOP (TEXAS FARM BUREAU)

PLAY IT SAFE. THAT TEXT CAN WAIT.

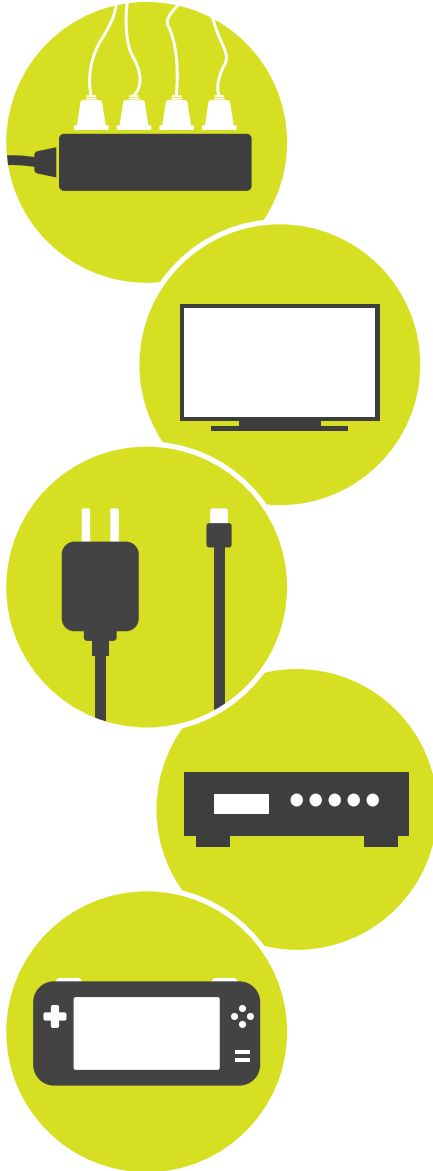
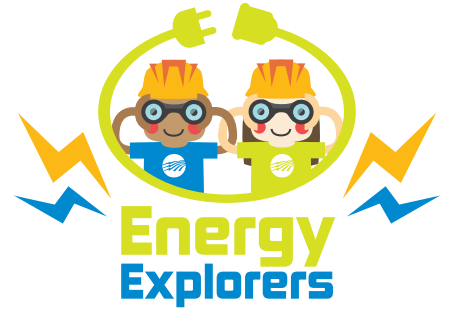


If it’s an emergency, pull over before answering the phone.

ELECTRONICS WORD SCRAMBLE

You can be more energy efficient by turning off unused electronics. Many electronics consume energy even when they're not being used. Unplug them to save energy.

Unscramble the letters below to reveal electronics you can turn off when not in use. Use the pictures for clues and check your work in the answer key.



1. NEPOH EHGRAC

2. MGAE NOESCLO

3. LCAEB XBO

4. EWROP PRTIS

5. ONSILEETIV

WORD BANK

Power strip Television Game console
 Cable box Phone charger

ANSWER KEY: 1) PHONE CHARGER 2) GAME CONSOLE 3) CABLE BOX 4) POWER STRIP 5) TELEVISION