

 [BELL SOUTH Yellow Pages](#)

[Sales and Shopping](#)

- ▣ Email news alerts
- ▣ Search restaurants

### Search the paper

ENTER KEYWORD:

Go!

### 7-day file

View a full week of the AJC free.

▶ [Past 7 days](#)

### ajc.com links

- ▶ [Home page](#)
- ▶ [News page](#)
- ▶ [Business](#)
- ▶ [Sports](#)
- ▶ [Living](#)
- ▶ [Opinion](#)
- ▶ [Travel](#)

### The Stacks

Staff-written stories back to 1985 in our fee-based archive.

[The Stacks](#)

### Obituary help

Guide to death information in the newspaper.

[Information Services](#)

### Weekly sections

MONDAY

▶ [Horizon](#)

TUESDAY

▶ [Healthy Living](#)

WEDNESDAY

▶ [Atlanta Tech](#)

▶ [Atlanta & the World](#)

THURSDAY

▶ [Home & Garden](#)

▶ [Food](#)

▶ [Buyer's Edge](#)

## METRO

SUNDAY • April 21, 2002

[Top headlines](#) / [Email news alerts](#) / [The Vent](#) / [Search Home Sales](#)

# LANE RANGER: Teen drivers get tips from former racer

Joey Ledford - Staff

Sunday, April 21, 2002

Former race car driver and automotive journalist David Thompson decided to devote his life to training teen drivers after one nearly killed him.

Thompson, broadsided by a pregnant 17-year-old, has become a nomadic peddler, his wares consisting of a one-day program he pledges will convert inexperienced teen drivers "from kamikaze to competent."

Next month he's setting up his orange cones in the big parking lot of First Baptist Church in Snellville. May 30 to June 1, Thompson will teach 10 teens a day his "New Driver Car Control Clinic," which stresses crash avoidance skills.

What is different about Thompson's approach is that a parent also must take the class. The parent becomes the coach, with the teen behind the wheel. Both are counseled by Thompson, who remains on foot and communicates through a headset.

Since Georgia parents are now required by law to spend at least 40 hours behind the wheel with their teen drivers, Thompson sees his clinic as a six-hour head start for parents. It's also a solid road map for the hours to follow.

"We basically give the parent a plan," he said. "These laws call for parents to spend 30 or 40 hours in the car, but they don't say what they should do."

Thompson said many teens don't want to take his class. Some won't even sit with their mom or dad --- at least in the morning.

"By the end of the day, they are high-fiving, slapping each other on the back, yelling and cheering," he said. "Watching the progress they can make from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. is just astonishing."

Part of the program involves teaching the parent how to be a driving coach. It works to remove the tension, the criticism, the white knuckles that often accompany a teen's getting behind the wheel with mom or dad in tow.

"When you first take a kid out on the road, your heart is in your mouth," said Thompson. "It ends up being a war, and it's a very unpleasant experience for the student."

Thompson tries to make the series of 10 practice exercises fun.

[Compare wages in the Atlanta area](#)

[Click here](#) to get a free email address that is easy to remember

yourname



[Sign up now](#)

for a free email account.

Get a [FREE email](#) account here.

Free local weekend planner emailed to you  
[Sign up now!](#)

### AJC info store

[Perfect gifts](#)

Posters, photos, front pages, books

[Posters](#)

Art and cartoons.

[Books](#)

Atlanta and

AJC authors

[Photos](#)

The South's best  
[Special products](#)  
Metro Guides, etc.

#### FRIDAY

- ▶ [Preview](#)
- ▶ [Wheels](#)

#### SATURDAY

- ▶ [Wheels](#)
- ▶ [Faith & Values](#)

#### Sunday sections

- ▶ [Arts](#)
- ▶ [Travel](#)
- ▶ [Living](#)
- ▶ [@issue](#)
- ▶ [Homefinder](#)
- ▶ [Personal Tech](#)
- ▶ [Jobs](#)

#### Communities

##### DAILY

##### WINNETT

- ▶ [Monday](#)
- ▶ [Tuesday](#)
- ▶ [Wednesday](#)
- ▶ [Thursday](#)
- ▶ [Friday](#)
- ▶ [Saturday](#)
- ▶ [Sunday](#)

##### THURSDAY

- ▶ [City Life](#)
- ▶ [Cherokee](#)
- ▶ [Clayton/Henry](#)
- ▶ [East Cobb](#)
- ▶ [Cobb](#)
- ▶ [Coweta](#)
- ▶ [DeKalb](#)
- ▶ [East Metro](#)
- ▶ [Fayette](#)
- ▶ [North Fulton](#)
- ▶ [South Metro](#)

"There are no quizzes, no scores, no pass-fail," he said. "The whole day is between you and those little orange cones in your car. We're just here to watch."

Thompson's crash-avoidance philosophy stresses being able to stop the car in an emergency. Braking sounds easy, but good drivers know how important it is to get the most out of their brakes while at the same time maintaining steering control.

"We think the first thing that has to happen is, the teens have to learn how to use the brakes and stop the car," he said.

Thompson has left behind parents and teens in North Carolina, Florida, Alabama and Massachusetts who praise his approach.

"This course saved my child's life," said Debbie Still of Palm Beach, Fla. "If I had a million dollars, I would take every one of my son's friends to this clinic."

Still's son must have a lot of friends. The clinic costs \$125 for each parent-teen team. "It's less than the best pair of sneakers they can buy," said Thompson. "It's affordable."

For more information or to register, call 1-800-862-3277 or visit

[www.carcontrol.com](http://www.carcontrol.com)

---

[home](#) | [news](#) | [news](#) | [metro](#) | [sports](#) | [business](#) | [living](#) | [opinion](#)

By using [ajc.com](#) you accept the terms of our [Visitor Agreement](#). Please read it.

Questions about your privacy? See our updated [Privacy Statement](#).

Interested in reprint permission? See our [Permissions Policy](#).

© 2002 [The Atlanta Journal-Constitution](#)