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# Opinions

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## Safety first for prom and graduation season

AAA reminds teen drivers to make a 'PROMise'

Submitted by AAA of Western and Central New York  
It's prom season across Western and Central New York, which means more teen drivers will be out and about. While prom is a celebration and a rite of passage, it can be a dangerous night on the roads. AAA is reminding teens, parents and educators to plan ahead to prevent prom and graduation season from turning deadly.

"Prom and graduation season is a special time when there's so much to celebrate," said Elizabeth Carey, director of public relations at AAA Western and Central New York. "Unfortunately, it can become particularly dangerous when the party spills out onto the road. The combination of potentially impaired and inexperienced drivers leads to a tragic end too often."

AAA asks teens to "PROMise" to plan ahead and stay safe:

√ I promise not to drive impaired or distracted.

√ I promise not to let my friends drive impaired or distracted.

√ I promise my parents I will get home safely or call them for help.

By making a "PROMise," teens can prevent substance-impaired driving, as well as distracted driving.



Parents also have an important role to play by making their children feel safe about calling them for help. Parents can PROMise that they will always pick up their teen regardless of the time or location.

Driving impaired can carry life-changing consequences. Teens could lose their academic eligibility, driver's license, even their life or that of their friends.

According to the CDC, teens are more likely than anyone else to be killed in an alcohol-related crash (even though the minimum legal drinking age in every state is 21).

### Advice for Teen Drivers

√ **Pay attention.** Texting and having other passengers in the vehicle can create dangerous distractions for drivers.

√ **Slow down.** Speeding is a factor in one-third of all fatal crashes involving teen drivers.

√ **Stay alert.** Prom celebrations can carry well into the late hours. Avoid driving drowsy.

√ **Buckle up.** Half of young drivers who die in motor vehicle crashes are not wearing their seat belts.

√ **Drive sober.** If you become impaired, pass the keys to a sober driver or call your parents for help.

### Advice for Parents

√ **Hire a ride.** Consider chipping in on a chauffeur so teens don't have to decide who's driving.

√ **Set the rules.** Establish rules for your teen driver, which address safe driving habits and the punishment for breaking them. Consider signing a parent-teen driving agreement.

√ **Open your home.** Encourage your teen to ask friends to spend the night to keep them off the roads.

√ **Be the example.** While driving, model the same behavior you expect from your kids when they drive. Your kids are always

watching you, even if they don't admit it.

AAA recommends enrolling teens in a driver education program. Learn more at [www.AAA.com/safedriving](http://www.AAA.com/safedriving).

As upstate New York's largest member services organization, AAA Western and Central New York provides more than 862,000 members with travel, insurance, financial and automotive-related services. Since its founding in 1900, AAA has been a leading advocate for the safety and security of all travelers. Visit AAA at [www.AAA.com](http://www.AAA.com).

## Catholic Charities: Appeal 2023 HOPE Day is Wednesday, May 17

Annual day of match giving supports Appeal's \$9.5 million goal

Guest Editorial by Catholic Charities

HOPE Day, the annual 24-hour match challenge day of giving to benefit Appeal, is Wednesday, May 17, across Western New York. The first \$111,000 raised will be matched dollar-for-dollar from generous donors including Delaware North, Energy Mark, and Thomann Asphalt Paving. All funds go toward the annual Appeal's \$9.5 million goal in support of Catholic Charities of Buffalo and the "Fund for the Faith."

Appeal 2023 has currently raised \$7 million, or 74% of its goal to date, with about six weeks to go in the campaign.

"Over the last five HOPE Days, a total of nearly \$2 million has been raised in support of the annual Ap-

peal," said Deacon Steve Schumer, president and CEO, Catholic Charities. "While we are grateful for the generosity the Western New York community has shown for Appeal 2023 to date, we still have some ground to make up as we strive to reach our campaign goal in just a few short weeks. You can help bring hope to our neighbors who need it most by joining with us on HOPE Day."

During HOPE Day, Appeal volunteers and Catholic Charities staff members will make phone calls to those who haven't donated yet this year, giving them the chance to double their gift. Volunteers will gather at Catholic Charities in Buffalo to reach out to donors or make calls from their

offices or homes.

"With only about six weeks left in Appeal 2023, HOPE Day provides a significant boost to our campaign," said Adam Sumlin, Ph.D., Appeal 2023 chair. "While every dollar raised makes a difference in providing hope and ensuring that much-needed programs and services can continue, on HOPE Day that dollar does twice as much with the match component."

The annual Appeal, which continues until June 30, helps fund 57 programs and services administered by Catholic Charities across dozens of locations and many diocesan ministries through the "Fund for the Faith." As the most comprehensive human services

provider serving people of all ages and faiths across all eight counties of Western New York, Catholic Charities' programs and services include basic emergency assistance such as food pantries, educational and vocational advancement services, family safety and stabilization services, immigration and refugee assistance, behavioral health and substance use treatment, and youth and family support services.

Donors can give at [ccwny.org/hopeday](http://ccwny.org/hopeday) or call 716-218-1400.

Catholic Charities has helped individuals and families in need since its founding in 1923.

For more information, visit [ccwny.org](http://ccwny.org).

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