

Junior Achievement members launch campaign to not text while driving

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By Adrienne Richardson

As a full-time mother who's always on the go, Wynne Avellanet said she's not always prepared for unexpected emergencies while driving. But recently, when her 8-year-old son, Noah, suffered from a bad nose bleed on the way to school, she was able to stop the bleeding.

"My son suffers from chronic nose bleeds, and we've often been caught in situations where we have nothing to alleviate the bleeding," said Avellanet, 42. But last time it happened, thanks to an 8-by-9 1/2-inch pouch stored in her car, Avellanet drove her son safely to school without distraction from the usual "bloody mess."

"There were tissues inside to stop the bleeding as well as wet wipes to clean both our hands after the incident," said Avellanet, referring to the Kar Kit.

The kit was developed last November by Alpha Essentials, a company created by six 16- and 17-year-old students from NSU University School, an independent college preparatory school in Fort Lauderdale. Team members include Andrew Hurowitz, president; Alexander Shuster, vice president of marketing; Alexis Bogomolni, vice president of supply chain; Evan Gutkin, vice president of finance; Cole Becker, vice president of sales; and Matthew Steiner, vice president of management.

The group created the kit as part of the Junior Achievement Fellows program, a competition that allows high school students to gain hands-on experience as entrepreneurs. Students sell stock, raise capital, market their products and liquidate the companies at the end of each year. The group chose the Kar Kit as their product hoping to target new teen drivers to prevent distracted driving.

"Texting and driving continues to grow among teens as smartphones become more widespread," said Andrew, 16.

"Our team wanted to work towards eliminating texting and driving."

To reduce the number of distracted drivers, the team included 11 items in the kit: five for personal use, five for safety and a pledge card to stop texting and driving. Some items inside the kit are a window breaker/seatbelt cutter, a poncho, breath spray and a flashlight.

"We focused on items that we believe every driver should have in their car, but rarely do," said Andrew.

Buyers sign the pledge card during their purchase of the kit, which costs \$20. The team encourages consumers to have their family sign, as well. The team also keeps track of signees' names on their website to show the pledge card's growth. One



of the first signees was Julia Hollo, 17, who signed the pledge card on Dec. 3, 2015. She started driving at 16.

"I use the Kar Kit twice a week, mostly the breath spray and wet wipes," Julia said. "It's reassuring to have an emergency kit by my side while driving — something to go to in a time of need."

Avellanet agrees and said she is happy there was a deeper and educational message associated with the purchase. "I signed the pledge card and also shared with my two younger children, who are way too young to drive," Avellanet said. "I want to start educating them early about the dangers of texting and driving."

Avellanet has started educating her two sons — Noah and Aidan, 11 — by igniting the conversation about safe driving. "It's advisable to be prepared for the unexpected, which is exactly what the Kar Kit provides its consumers," Avellanet said. "No one can anticipate what they may need in the event of an emergency while in the car — especially with young children."

Since its launch in December, Alpha Essentials has sold 303 kits and made \$3,832.97.

The team plans to donate 10 percent of its funds to End Distracted Driving, an organization that raises awareness about the dangers of distracted driving.

"While we hope to prosper as a business, we would like to continue spreading awareness about safe driving," said Matthew, 17.

The team is now preparing for the final JA Fellows Competition on Saturday, March 12, and plans to continue promoting the product after the contest on the website and social media.