Do Teens Have the Drive to Drive?

By Rosie Lopez

In America, the idea of finally being able to drive has become a rite of passage. Students dream of the day they finally have the freedom to get behind the wheel and go where they want, when they want, without parents or other adults in tow.

While some believe that driving a vehicle is one of the top priorities on their teen's list, this generation has continually decreased in the percentage of students who obtain their licenses at the expected age of sixteen.

Even if many have already stepped up and now are able to drive with a license in their wallet, there are still teens who haven't taken the plunge to sit behind a wheel, legally. Even at DHS, nearly one third of eligible drivers have not obtained their licenses.

Students today may not view driving in the same way that past generations have done.

"Teens today seem to be lacking interest in driving," junior Livia Schweitzer said. "They can search for other ways, believing the options are endless."

One reason behind this lack of rushing to get behind the wheel is a concern about difficult situations that may arise on the road. They feel overwhelmed with the what-ifs like possibly crashing or watching out for reckless drivers.

"I often tell myself that it isn't necessary to have a driver's license," sophomore Kendall Kasl said. "Mostly I am concerned about all of the possibilities that one day I might put myself in a car crash and how much that might affect me or someone else."

Students who already have a driver's license still worry about the same thoughts when driving.

"I always fear being in an accident," junior Michael Maldando said. "It's normal to feel a sense of fear, and I have to be patient with myself all the time."

Another reason for the lack of a license is because of obligations that override rushing to the DMV; the students still haven't had the chance to get their driver's license yet.

"I never have the time to learn how to drive due to taking care of my little brother," junior Jonathan Hernandez said. "I also need to focus on family responsibilities around the house."

Some students drive a car without taking the time to get a license.

"I know there are students who drive all of the time and have never gotten a license," junior Emilia Perez said. "It's a lot more common that people realize."

There may even be students who go off to college and still don't have a license.

"I know students who are in college and their parents still have to drive them to and from school," Sandy Severance, English teacher said. "That would have been unheard of when I was growing up in the '80's."

For some, it may be for financial reasons. Owning a car costs money, both for the car, car maintenance, and insurance. Some families may not be able to afford a separate car for each child to drive.

"I think one reason there might be fewer drivers now than in the past is that cars are so expensive," sophomore Ella Vyhnalek said. "It costs a lot to get a car and to pay the monthly expenses. If a family can't afford to do that, then it doesn't make sense to them to learn to drive."

Other students don't mind being driven around.

"I think students don't really worry about driving on their own," sophomore Lyberty Bartlett said. "I think they rely more on other people to give them rides so they don't have to learn to drive."

Driving can be a complicated step for students who aren't ready. Students that have a driver's license remind themselves of their own advice when driving.

"I've been behind a wheel all my life, and I didn't find driving hard," junior Mackenize Yager said. "It takes time for others to face the fear, but they need to make sure that they realize when they are ready."

Caution is key as well.

"Remember to be cautious on the road and to look out for other drivers," senior Caden Axline said. "Be comfortable but not too comfortable."

Students who are still waiting to be old enough to drive have learned how important it is to be aware when it comes to driving.

"I'm still not old enough to get my driver's license," freshman Troy Dawes said. "I've been practicing, and one thing I learned is to never be comfortable driving. It will lead you to make mistakes, and the moment you don't take the privilege responsibly, a possible car crash could happen."

However, freedom does await those who seek it out.

"I believe that teens are driving to get the taste of freedom," freshman Brennaly Vazquez said. "They can go places without having their parents take them, and it is a step toward self independence."