

Safe streets require cooperation from everyone

I was heartbroken to learn that on July 23, a 15-year-old boy, Luke Guetti, was struck and killed by a pickup truck while on an evening bike ride in his neighborhood in the Town of Tonawanda. He was the second child to die while riding their bike in Tonawanda this year. This tragedy is part of a rising regional trend first reported by the Buffalo News in March. Since Luke's death, three more pedestrians and cyclists have lost their lives, and three others have been critically injured after being struck by vehicles in Western New York. While Clarence has been fortunate to avoid pedestrian fatalities this year, we must be proactive to maintain this safety.

We are often told to "share the road" to protect pedestrians and cyclists, but this advice falls short when our roads are designed to prioritize moving cars from point A to point B as quickly as possible. Compounding this issue, cars are getting bigger, and their drivers are increasingly distracted. By viewing traffic as a hierarchy that prioritizes the safety of our most vulnerable road users, we can create safer streets for everyone, in-

cluding drivers. Achieving this requires cooperation from all of us, including those who design our roads and those who use them.

Drivers' speed plays a crucial role in ensuring the safety of pedestrians and cyclists. A Foundation for Traffic Safety report found that the risk of death for pedestrians struck by cars increases from 10% at 23 mph to 25% at 32 mph. Anyone who lives in Clarence neighborhoods knows that typical 25 mph speed limits are often ignored. This risk escalates at the higher speeds of our busier roads. The risk of death reaches 50% at 42 mph and 75% at 50 mph. Drivers can significantly reduce the chances of these tragic collisions by slowing down, giving extra space, and practicing defensive driving techniques. While pedestrians must also be vigilant, there are scenarios where it is impossible to avoid a collision, making improvements in physical infrastructure critical.

Enhancing pedestrian and bike networks in

Clarence will reduce conflict points with cars.

We are fortunate to have existing sidewalks, bike lanes and bike paths. Recent additions like new sidewalks on Greiner Road and a \$5 million state grant to expand sidewalk coverage in Clarence Center are wins for our community. However, there is still more to be done. Improving the overall connectivity of this infrastructure in future projects and increasing traffic-calming measures in pedestrian-heavy areas will encourage walking and biking for transportation, which benefits businesses, public health and the environment.

As you enjoy the roads and trails this summer, remember that we're all on this journey together, so let's keep each other safe.

To learn more about the Clarence Democratic Committee, visit clarencenydems.com or join us at our next monthly meeting at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Sept. 4, in the American Legion Hall.



**Alexander
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**CLARENCE
DEMOCRATIC
COMMITTEE CHAIR**