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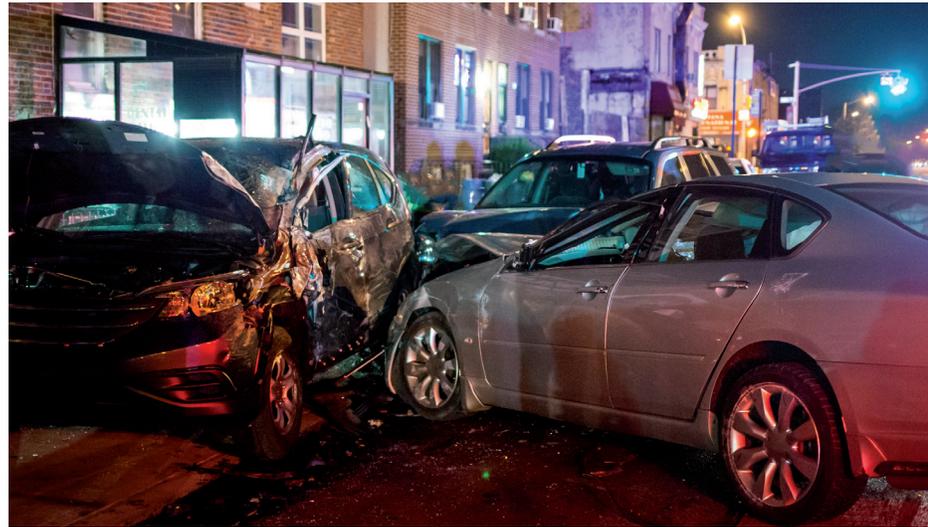
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Thrills That Kill

Turning Tragedy into Purpose

By Lili Trujillo Puckett and Lori Argumedo

Street Racing Kills (SRK) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to raising awareness about the dangers of illegal street racing and reckless driving. This article highlights SRK's mission and the impactful work it is doing to save lives on American roadways. Founded by Lili Trujillo Puckett and later joined by Lori Argumedo—both of whom experienced personal tragedy—SRK transforms grief into purpose. Their mission is to end the devastation caused by illegal street racing and reckless driving through education, advocacy, and community outreach.¹

The Problem

Across the country, cities are grappling with a dangerous and disruptive trend: groups of drivers converging at intersections to perform donuts, race, and engage in other reckless stunts for cheering crowds. These spontaneous gatherings—commonly

¹ This article was edited with the assistance of the artificial intelligence of Microsoft 365 Co-Pilot Chat and in compliance with the National District Attorneys Artificial Intelligence Usage Policy. For additional information about Microsoft 365 Co-Pilot Chat, visit learn.microsoft.com/en-us/copilot/.

Thrills That Kill: Turning Tragedy into Purpose

referred to as “street takeovers,” “sideshows,” or “car meetups”—can involve dozens or even hundreds of vehicles, turning public roads into chaotic arenas. Originally gaining momentum during the pandemic, these events have persisted and even grown in frequency, fueled by social media, peer influence, and the thrill of high-risk behavior. While often involving young people seeking excitement or a sense of community, the consequences are far from harmless.²

Street takeovers pose serious public safety risks. They block traffic, delay emergency responders, and frequently result in crashes, injuries, and even fatalities—including among bystanders and law enforcement. In some cases, these events have been linked to violent crimes, such as assaults and homicides. Addressing this issue demands a significant investment of law enforcement resources, as well as innovative strategies to prevent gatherings before they start and respond swiftly when they occur. While the motivations behind these events may be complex, the danger they pose is clear—and growing.³

Across the United States, an estimated 7.3 out of every 100,000 licensed drivers have a street racing violation on their record within the past seven years. North Dakota stands out with the highest rate in the nation—nearly 70 out of every 100,000 drivers there have been cited for street racing.⁴ The dangers of such behavior are stark. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), 12,151 lives were lost in speeding-related crashes in 2022. NHTSA classifies a crash as speeding-related if any driver involved was charged with a speeding offense or if law enforcement determined that racing, driving too fast for conditions, or exceeding the speed limit contributed to the incident.⁵ These statistics underscore the deadly consequences of reckless driving and highlight the urgent need for prevention, enforcement, and public awareness.

Legislative Efforts

To combat the rise in illegal street racing and exhibition driving, 15 states—including Alabama, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Maryland, Nevada, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, and Washington—have enacted targeted legislation since 2020.⁶ These laws aim to curb dangerous driving behaviors by expanding legal definitions, increasing penalties, and authorizing vehicle impoundments.⁷ For example, Washington’s SB 5606 (2023) broadened the definition of street racing to include drifting, defined as “intentionally oversteering a vehicle in order to lose traction while turning.” The law also holds individuals accountable for aiding or abetting exhibition driving, even if they are not physically present at the scene. First-time offenders face a 72-hour vehicle impoundment, while repeat violations can result in vehicle seizure and forfeiture.⁸ Other states have taken similar steps. Texas (HB 1442, 2023) now treats organizing a street takeover as a form of organized criminal activity, while Oregon (SB 615, 2023) criminalizes obstructing highways to facilitate such events.⁹ These legislative efforts reflect a growing recognition of the public safety threat posed by street exhibitions and the need for comprehensive enforcement tools.

² Police Executive Research Forum, “Street takeovers are a national problem,” December 7, 2024, available at www.policeforum.org/trending7dec24 (accessed May 12, 2025). See also NPR’s “As sideshows gain popularity, police try a range of tactics to stop them in their tracks,” June 26, 2024, available at www.npr.org/2024/06/26/nx-s1-4996234/as-sideshows-gain-popularity-police-try-a-range-of-tactics-to-stop-them-in-their-tracks (accessed May 12, 2025); CBS News, “2 Sacramento sideshows turn deadly, police search for shooting suspects,” September 22, 2024, available at www.cbsnews.com/sacramento/news/sacramento-sideshows-deadly-police-search-for-shooting-suspects/ (accessed May 12, 2025); and Marciano, Chris, “Street Takeovers: What They Are, Why They’re Dangerous, & How to Stop Them,” Prepare to Act, May 12, 2025, available at preparetoact.com/blog/street-takeovers-phenomenon-impact-communities (accessed May 12, 2025).

³ *Id.*

⁴ “Speeding Toward Trouble: States with the Most Street Racers,” Insurify, July 10, 2023, available at insurify.com/car-insurance/insights/states-with-the-most-street-racers/ (accessed May 12, 2025).

⁵ National Center for Statistics and Analysis. (2024, July). Speeding: 2022 data (Traffic Safety Facts. Report No. DOT HS 813 582). National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, available at crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813582 (accessed May 12, 2025).

⁶ Wicks, Matt, “Can Tougher Laws Curb Exhibition Driving, Street ‘Takeovers?’,” National Conference of State Legislatures, April 17, 2024, available at www.ncsl.org/state-legislatures-news/details/can-tougher-laws-curb-exhibition-driving-street-takeovers (accessed May 12, 2025).

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

While some cities—such as Charlotte, North Carolina—have achieved notable success in reducing illegal street racing and takeover events through strict enforcement and community engagement, others, like Los Angeles, continue to struggle with persistent activity. The ongoing challenges in these areas are driven by a combination of factors, including lenient penalties, the viral nature of social media, and the adaptability of street racing communities, which often shift locations and tactics to evade law enforcement.¹⁰

SRK Mission and Program—The Fast & Fatal Workshops

Through dynamic school presentations, engaging community workshops, and emotionally resonant storytelling, SRK brings the harsh realities of reckless driving into sharp focus. At the core of this effort is the Fast & Fatal Workshop Series, a comprehensive suite of programs designed to educate, empower, and inspire young drivers. This series includes impactful initiatives such as Teen Traffic Safety Assemblies, which deliver compelling messages directly to students in school settings; the Go Beyond Driving School, which reinforces safe driving habits through practical instruction; the Teen Traffic Safety Senior Project, offering students a chance to explore traffic safety as a capstone experience; and Teen Traffic Safety Virtual Events, which extend SRK's reach to audiences beyond the classroom through accessible online programming. These programs use a dynamic mix of videos, PowerPoint presentations, real-life victim speakers, traffic safety materials, law enforcement participation, interactive role-playing, and even a crashed vehicle display to drive home the message.

Through dynamic school presentations, engaging community workshops, and emotionally resonant storytelling, SRK brings the harsh realities of reckless driving into sharp focus.

In addition to these workshops, SRK also offers:

- Val's Respect the Road Scholarship, which supports students committed to promoting safe driving, and
- The Reckless Driving Intervention Program, designed to educate and redirect young drivers who have engaged in dangerous behavior.

Together, these initiatives form a comprehensive, emotionally resonant approach to traffic safety education—one that not only informs but inspires lasting change.

Val's Respect the Road Scholarship

As traditional driver's education programs become increasingly rare in high schools, many teen drivers are left without essential behind-the-wheel training—despite its importance and legal necessity for licensing. Recognizing this gap, SRK created the Val's Respect the Road Scholarship, a program dedicated to promoting safe driving habits among teens.

Named in loving memory of Valentina, the daughter of SRK's founder, and developed in partnership with the Auto Club of Southern California, this scholarship provides free professional behind-the-wheel instruction to eligible teens. The program not only equips young drivers with critical skills but also honors Valentina's legacy by fostering a culture of responsibility, awareness, and respect on the road.

¹⁰ See Street takeovers dropped by 88% in 2024 compared to 2023, from 134 to 16 events. Pre-arranged events decreased by 71%, from 95 to 28. This decline is attributed to new laws and increased enforcement. See Sands, Alexandria, "CMPD reports steep drop in street takeovers," Axios Charlotte, January 24, 2025, available at www.axios.com/local/charlotte/2025/01/24/cmpd-street-takeovers-police (accessed May 12, 2025). See also Street racing reports increased by nearly 50% in early 2024 compared to the same period in 2023. Street takeovers slightly rose 2% to 190 incidents. Vehicle impounds decreased by 68%, from 214 to 69, indicating challenges in enforcement. Reviewing Existing Laws Designed to Control Street Racing and Takeovers and Determine Their Efficacy, LAPD Intradepartmental Correspondence from Chief of Police to The Board of Police Commissioners, June 12, 2024, available at www.lapdpolice.com.lacity.org/061824/BPC_24-112.pdf (accessed May 12, 2025); see also Leonard, Eric, "Street races, takeovers on the rise in early 2024," NBC Los Angeles, June 17, 2024, available at www.nbclosangeles.com/investigations/street-races-takeovers-on-the-rise-in-early-2024/3438592/ (accessed May 12, 2025).

Reckless Driving Intervention Program

The SRK Reckless Driving Intervention Program is a powerful, court-recognized online initiative designed to address the dangers of street racing and reckless driving. Developed in collaboration with law enforcement agencies, district attorneys, and court systems, this program targets both youth and adult offenders, aiming to educate, reform, and inspire lasting behavioral change.

Delivered in a convenient three-hour virtual format—available in both English and Spanish—the program combines diversion education with reflective learning to help participants understand the real-world consequences of dangerous driving behaviors.

The SRK Reckless Driving Intervention Program is built around a series of powerful, immersive learning experiences designed to shift perspectives and inspire change. At the heart of the program are heartfelt narratives—emotional, firsthand accounts from individuals whose lives have been forever altered by reckless driving. These stories bring a human face to the statistics, making the consequences of dangerous behavior deeply personal and unforgettable.

To offer a constructive outlet for car enthusiasts, the program introduces safe racing alternatives, highlighting legal venues and events where drivers can enjoy speed and performance in a controlled, responsible environment. This approach not only redirects risky behavior but also celebrates car culture in a way that prioritizes safety.

Participants also receive clear, accessible legal education, gaining a thorough understanding of the laws and penalties surrounding street racing, speeding, takeovers, and other forms of reckless driving. This knowledge empowers them to make informed decisions and recognize the serious consequences of their actions.

Finally, the program features interactive sessions that foster direct engagement with law enforcement officers and reformed offenders. These conversations provide real-world insights and create space for honest dialogue, helping participants reflect on their choices and envision a safer path forward.

The SRK Reckless Driving Intervention Program addresses a wide spectrum of high-risk driving behaviors that endanger lives and communities. Participants explore the realities of street racing and takeover events, gaining insight into how these spectacles escalate into chaos and tragedy. The program also delves into the dangers of speeding and burnouts, behaviors often glamorized but with devastating consequences. Equally important are discussions around tailgating and road rage, which can quickly turn routine drives into volatile encounters. The curriculum tackles the critical issue of impaired driving, emphasizing how alcohol, drugs, and even fatigue can severely compromise judgment and reaction time.

Participants also examine the legal and moral implications of hit-and-run incidents and the serious consequences of evading law enforcement. Ultimately, the program provides a comprehensive look at all forms of reckless and aggressive driving, helping individuals recognize the patterns, triggers, and outcomes of these behaviors—and equipping them with the tools to choose safer alternatives.

To encourage positive change, participants may also receive incentives such as free tickets to local racetracks and auto museums, promoting a safer, more responsible appreciation of car culture. Upon completion, participants earn a certificate of completion, which may be used to satisfy court or diversion program requirements.

Through its Fast & Fatal Workshop Series, SRK is reaching thousands of students each year, delivering powerful traffic safety education that resonates with young drivers and inspires real change. These workshops are more than just presentations—they're a movement. And the impact is clear: 92% of participants report they would think twice before engaging in illegal street racing after attending an SRK session. SRK's programs are not only raising awareness—they're changing mindsets and saving lives.



The SRK Reckless Driving Intervention Program aims to educate, reform, and inspire lasting behavioral change.

Beyond Education: Advocacy, Innovation & Awareness

SRK's mission extends far beyond the classroom. As a passionate advocate for safer roads, SRK has played a key role in shaping policy, contributing to the passage of four California bills aimed at cracking down on illegal street racing and takeover events.

In addition to legislative advocacy, SRK partners with forward-thinking organizations like AAA and Waymo, exploring cutting-edge innovations in road safety and autonomous vehicle technology to help shape a safer future for all road users.

SRK also amplifies its message through its podcast, *Before and After*, which brings powerful, personal conversations to a wider audience. The podcast highlights the emotional toll of traffic violence and underscores the urgent need for preventative action—making the case for change through real stories and lived experiences.

Suggestions for Collaboration

SRK believes that solving the street racing and reckless driving crisis requires collective action, innovation, and cross-sector partnerships. No single organization can tackle this issue alone—SRK invites communities, agencies, and industry leaders to join us in creating safer roads. Here are several impactful ways to collaborate:

Cross-Agency Task Forces

To effectively combat illegal street racing and reckless driving, SRK encourages the formation of strategic partnerships that bring together law enforcement agencies, trauma centers, city governments, and community organizations. These collaborations are essential for identifying and monitoring street racing hotspots, allowing for a more targeted and timely response. By sharing data and analyzing emerging trends, partners can stay ahead of evolving behaviors and better understand the scope of the issue. Just as importantly, these alliances can coordinate diversion and intervention programs tailored for at-risk youth—offering education, support, and alternatives before dangerous habits take root.

Insurance Incentives

Work with auto insurance providers to offer premium discounts or safe driving credits to young drivers who complete certified street racing prevention programs like SRK's Fast & Fatal Workshops.

Integrate SRK into Driver's Education

Advocate for the inclusion of SRK's traffic safety curriculum in both public and private driver's education programs. Early education is key to prevention.

Peer Ambassador Programs

Empower students to become traffic safety ambassadors in their schools and communities. Peer-led initiatives can be especially effective in shifting youth culture and attitudes toward reckless driving.

Influencer & Cultural Partnerships

Collaborate with local artists, car clubs, musicians, and digital creators to deliver anti-street racing messages in culturally relevant and engaging ways. These voices can help normalize safe driving within youth and car enthusiast communities.

No single organization can tackle the street racing issue alone—SRK invites communities, agencies, and industry leaders to join us in creating safer roads.

Safe Driving Events & Alternatives

Host or sponsor legal racing events, car shows, and driving skill competitions that offer thrill-seeking drivers a safe, controlled environment to enjoy car culture without endangering lives.

Scholarships & Career Pathways

Support scholarships like Val's Respect the Road and create career exploration opportunities in automotive technology, motorsports, and public safety to redirect passion into purpose.

Policy Advocacy for Real Change

SRK is a strong advocate for tougher legislation targeting illegal street takeovers and repeat offenders, while also championing increased funding for prevention and education programs like its own. While enforcement is essential, it cannot stand alone. Sustainable change requires a dual approach—accountability through the law, and transformation through education and behavioral intervention. By investing in both, we can not only deter dangerous driving but also empower individuals to make safer, more informed choices behind the wheel.

About the Authors

Lili Trujillo Puckett

In 2014, tragedy struck when Valentina, just 16 years old, lost her life in a devastating street racing crash. Determined to ensure that no other family would have to endure such a heartbreaking loss, her mother, Lili Trujillo Puckett, channeled her grief into purpose by founding SRK (Street Racing Kills). What began as a personal mission quickly evolved into a powerful movement. Lil's story—rooted in unimaginable loss—has become a compelling call to action, sparking meaningful conversations about the dangers of reckless driving and inspiring communities to prioritize traffic safety.

Lori Argumedo

Lori Argumedo joined SRK in 2019 after a devastating personal loss—her 23-year-old niece, Bethany, was struck and killed by a street racer. Bethany had just completed her nursing program and was preparing to begin a career dedicated to saving lives. Her future was full of promise, compassion, and purpose. In the wake of this tragedy, Lori made a heartfelt vow to keep Bethany's memory alive. That promise now fuels her unwavering commitment to SRK's mission, turning grief into advocacy and honoring Bethany by working to prevent similar tragedies from happening to others.



Valentina and Lili Trujillo Puckett



Bethany and Lori Argumedo

About Street Racing Kills

Street Racing Kills (SRK) is a nonprofit organization driven by a powerful mission: to raise awareness about the deadly consequences of illegal street racing and reckless driving. With a deep commitment to education, prevention, and advocacy, SRK works to turn tragedy into change—one story, one student, one community at a time. SRK calls on prosecutors, community leaders, educators, and traffic safety professionals to stand with us. Together, we can shift the culture, protect lives, and put an end to the thrill that kills.

For more information about Street Racing Kills, visit streetracingkills.org.



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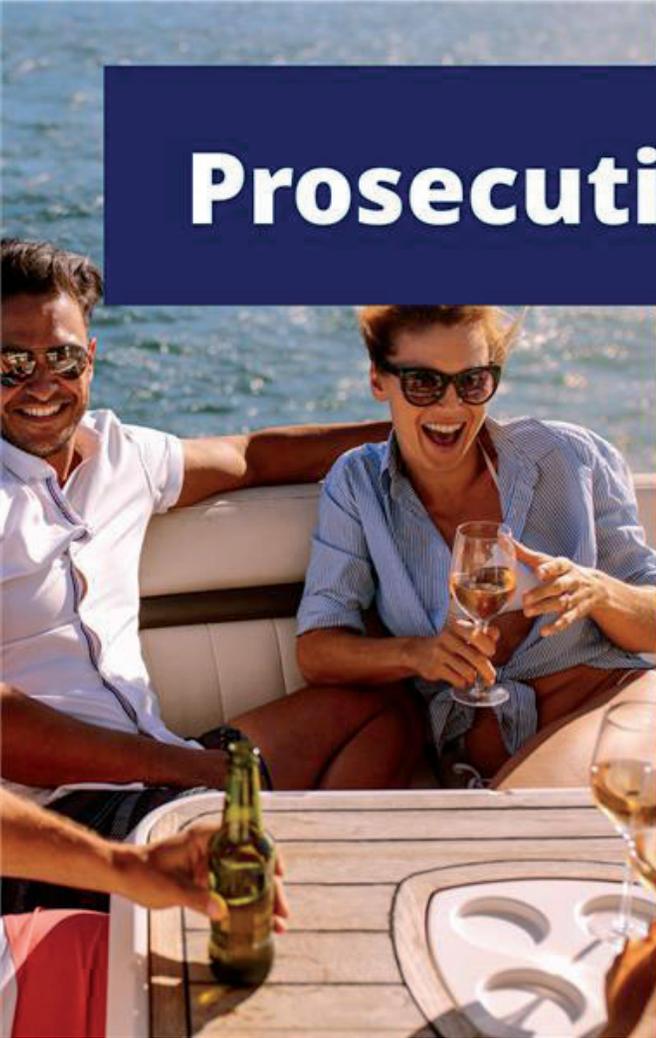
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