

NEW-DRIVER TRAINING LIMITED IN VALLEY SCHOOLS

CSIU takes the wheel



Justin Engle/The Daily Item

Doug McRoberts, driver's education teacher with the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, watches as Tucker Hays goes over the pre-drive checkout list.

Agency's reps guide teens through towns, on highways

By Joe Sylvester
The Daily Item

MONTANDON — Tucker Hays was getting a little impatient on Thursday morning, waiting for his final driving lesson with Doug McRoberts.

This was the big day, the one Tucker had studied for and driven for hours to get to.

This was the day the 16-year-old from Watsonstown was taking his driver's test to finally get his license.

The Warrior Run School District student and many other teens who want to take driver

education in the Valley have been doing so through McRoberts and other instructors with the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit. Area high schools no longer offer behind-the-wheel driver training and few offer classroom instruction.

Tucker, who will be a junior in the fall, attended the last classroom driver instruction the district will offer. It hasn't offered behind-the-wheel training for several years, according to Superintendent John Kurelja.

"We were one of the last to offer it," Kurelja said.

He said his district and oth-

ers have cut driver education courses primarily for financial reasons.

Julie Shumaker, program manager for CSIU's adult education, which includes driver education, said the intermediate unit has the cars and seven instructors for the six-hour behind-the-wheel course.

"Some of the districts have dropped the classroom instruction, which is a prerequisite," Shumaker said. "A lot of students are taking it online through driversed.com."

Please see **CSIU**, Page A2

June 10, 2016

The Daily Item

Setting the Standard for Quality Journalism

GOOD MORNING TO NANCY SHERWOOD OF BELLEVILLE

June 10, 2016

NEW-DRIVER TRAINING LIMITED IN VALLEY SCHOOLS

CSIU takes the wheel



Agency's reps guide teens through towns, on highways

By Joe Sylvester
The Daily Item

MONTANDON — Tucker Hays was getting a little impatient on Thursday morning, waiting for his final driving lesson with Doug McRoberts.

This was the big day, the one Tucker had studied for and driven for hours to get to.

This was the day the 16-year-old from Watsonstown was taking his driver's test to finally get his license.

The Warrior Run School District student and many other teens who want to take driver

education in the Valley have been doing so through McRoberts and other instructors with the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit. Area high schools no longer offer behind-the-wheel driver training and few offer classroom instruction.

Tucker, who will be a junior in the fall, attended the last classroom driver instruction the district will offer. It hasn't offered behind-the-wheel training for several years, according to Superintendent John Kurelja.

"We were one of the last to offer it," Kurelja said.

He said his district and oth-

ers have cut driver education courses primarily for financial reasons.

Julie Shumaker, program manager for CSIU's adult education, which includes driver education, said the intermediate unit has the cars and seven instructors for the six-hour behind-the-wheel course.

"Some of the districts have dropped the classroom instruction, which is a prerequisite," Shumaker said. "A lot of students are taking it online through driversed.com."

Please see **CSIU**, Page A2

HOVER'S
BERNINA SEW LLC

15% OFF
ALL FABRIC

CSIU offers behind-wheel training

CSIU, from Page A1

The 30-hour online course is approved by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, she said.

Tucker was taking his third two-hour lesson on Thursday, after also having met the state-required 65 hours of driving with a parent or guardian who is a licensed driver over at least six months. Ten of those hours must be in inclement weather and 5 hours at night, McRoberts said.

"Hopefully, I'll get my license today," Tucker said before heading out for his lesson.

He said his parallel parking, the roadblock to many young drivers' progress, went OK.

Practice makes perfect

"I have the kids parallel park until I'm satisfied," said McRoberts, a former Warrior Run science teacher who also taught driver education for the district from 1975 until he became an instructor for the CSIU in the 1990s.

"Essentially, it was a required course," he said. "Local car dealers provided loaner cars. The district had to pay the insurance. Then the car companies stopped subsidizing it."

He said Sunbury Motors still provides cars to the CSIU for free.

McRoberts said he was disappointed schools no longer offer the training.

"It's one of the most important things they could teach," he said.

Tucker said he had to change a tire, check the oil and learn about the other fluids during his classroom instruction.

McRoberts, in addition to instructing students on the basics, emphasizes the importance of



Justin Engle/The Daily Item

Tucker Hays, 16, smiles while talking before his driver's license test.

not texting or talking on the cell phone when driving.

No texts, no phone calls

"One of my things driving on the highway, I could point out what other drivers are doing wrong, if I see somebody texting or talking on a cell phone," he said.

He said young drivers are only allowed one other passenger under 18 who is not family

for the first six months they have their licenses.

"They could pull you over and arrest you for texting or talking on the phone," McRoberts said.

He said he takes his students on a variety of roads in towns and in the country and through traffic light and stop sign intersections, as well as onto Interstate 80.

"We always got lucky on the

left-hand turns," Tucker said.

McRoberts said students under 18 who fail the driver's test have to wait a week to retake the test after the first and second times. If they fail a third time, they have to send for a new permit.

He said the students could take their driver's test at a testing center, but there is a waiting list.

Shumaker said school dis-

tricts refer students to the driving course, but the districts don't contract with the CSIU for the classes.

"The driver picks them up in the school district parking lot, at their home or at a midway point," she said. "It's a six-hour course. They drive in one- and two-hour increments."

She said all seven instructors are certified by the state to give the course exam.

"The teacher is responsible for getting permission from the parent and setting up the schedule," Shumaker said.

\$350 for youths

The course for students costs \$350. There is an hourly rate of \$65 for adult instruction, Shumaker said.

"We do not test adults," she said. "They don't fall under PDE regulations."

She said students could receive some funding help for the course from such agencies as Children and Youth, Career Link and the Community Action Agency.

The driver education course also could save students 3 percent on their car insurance. But Nancy Zaborowski, CSIU data and driver ed assistant, said the discount would depend on the insurance company and it's only on a certain line item, not the whole policy.

Tucker, who admitted to being a little nervous about taking his test, had no reason to worry. He passed it.

"He's handled himself very well," McRoberts said.

■ **Email comments or questions to jsylvester@dailyitem.com. Follow Sylvester on Twitter @JoepSylvester.**