An Uncivil Situation- Road Rage

 Continuing our journey to a more civil community, while it is encouraging to recognize behavior that is civil, we also need to see those that are not. Consequently, in the future I will be making you aware of both civil and uncivil situations. Recently in several discussions that I had, the same uncivil situation was mentioned- Road Rage. Ironically, road rage has been a topic on TV shows.

 The term was first used by newscasters from a LA TV Station in 1987-88 due to a number of shooting that occurred on freeways 402,110. And 10. The internet definition is “aggressive or angry behavior by a driver of an automobile or other road vehicle.” Such behaviors include acceleration, braking and close tailgating; cutting others off in a lane or deliberately preventing someone from merging; chasing other motorists; flashing lights or blowing the horn excessively; yelling or exhibiting disruptive behavior at roadside establishments; rude gestures; shouting abuses/threats; hitting another vehicle or intentionally causing a collision; assaulting other drivers, passengers, cyclists or pedestrians; threatening to use or using a firearm or other deadly weapon; and throwing projectiles from a moving vehicle with the intent to do damage.

 At the present time only a few states have specific driving laws. This behavior has been prosecuted as assault and battery with or without a vehicle or vehicular homicide. Since 2008 there have been 1119 fatal crashes and 1389 fatalities. Cities ranking high in aggressive driving are New York, Dallas/Fort Worth, Detroit, Atlanta, and Minneapolis/St. Paul. Police say the cause is aggressive driving. Psychologists are now looking at the emotional aspects and considering a mental illness issue. Of individuals 8 out of 10 consider road rage as serious or extremely serious risk that jeopardizes their safety. But this is uncivil behavior.

Now that we have a fuller picture of road rage and acknowledge that we have all been victims of various road rage behaviors, we can think ahead to how to handle future occurrences in a civil manner by using the civility tools. First we can listen and be inclusive. All drivers make some driving mistakes. There is no easy way to say sorry. Often when we are driving we are distracted by multiple things and are less attentive. There are events that affect the flow of traffic. We are sharing the roads with other drivers, pedestrians, cyclists, and often animals who each have a destination and a time frame. Thus, when one such incidence occurs, you can first reflect on what you know, accept their humanness, remain calm, and take no action.

You can help yourself by recognizing what kind of driver you are. AAA has a test that you can take on the internet under the topic of road rage. I took the test myself. There were 4 categories, anger, impatience, competing, and punishing with ten questions each. Above a low rating you were given some suggestions. I was quite low on competing and punishing, still on anger, but I am impatient. Of course, I did know that and all my friends know that as I am complaining if I get a red light. I need to remind myself that there are other drivers on the road. I need to become more cooperative and accommodating. I will get to my destination. Further it can be helpful to try to concentrate only on driving when we are behind the wheel, we will make less mistakes, and there will be less opportunity for another driver to use road rage behavior.

Of course, there are those drivers who use aggressive driving behavior. Again we have to consider our tools. Sometimes when we are listening, we may feel it is not an appropriate time for us to voice our view. We listen only. First we cannot control another person’s driving behavior. We are almost never in a position where you could have a civil conversation. Afterall you are in one vehicle and the driver in another moving down a highway. Now is not the time. If you try to gesture in any manner, you may just escalate the road rage. Best is to back off and work to get yourself calm. Check the internet for many more helpful tips.

Our calming driving behavior will result in more civil driving, and the police who are working to address those who are road ragers will be able to stop them with the law.

To safe and civil roads.

Orlaine I. Gabert, Door County Civility Project

Doorcountycivilityproject.org

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