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SADD Celebrates 20 Years With Debut Of New “Think About It” Campaign

By Ruth Esteban-Muir,
Traffic Safety Programs

July 17, 2001. Washington D.C. Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) celebrated its 20th year by announcing a new campaign to combat underage drinking and impaired driving. In the midst of almost 500 students from around the country in bright yellow t-shirts sporting the theme of a new national campaign, U.S. Department of Transportation Secretary Norman Mineta joined SADD’s 17-year old Student of the Year Justin Weseloh of Independence, Ohio in announcing the “Think About It” campaign. Although news broke of Washington Post publisher Katharine Graham’s death, the press conference held on the Capitol steps drew media coverage from across the nation.

“The most impressive thing in Washington today isn’t the majestic Capitol building or the nearby monuments, but the compassion and intelligence of the young people,” Secretary Mineta said in salute to the sea of yellow for their 20 years of accomplishments. Although the alcohol-related motor vehicle fatality rate is now the lowest on record, 9 fatalities per 100,000 youth in 1999, he informed the media “2,238 young lives were lost because of alcohol-related crashes in 1999. Such fatalities are unacceptable, and we cannot rest on past successes because every day an increasing population of young drivers will receive their licenses.” He called on parents and adult relatives to “Please talk to the young people in your life about not drinking or using drugs, driving safely, and wearing a seatbelt.” Secretary Mineta signed and presented a mock check of \$300,000 representing NHTSA’s commitment to a two-year cooperative agreement with SADD.

Short of reaching the goal to reduce youth alcohol-related fatalities to 2,000 by the end of the year 2000, SADD focuses on a new

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Secretary Mineta joins SADD’s Student of the Year Justin Weseloh and SADD Executive Director Penny Wells in announcing the “Think About It” campaign.

NHTSA Reports on Major Survey Of Cell Phone Use by Drivers

By Elly Martin,
Office of Public and Consumer Affairs

July 23, 2001. Washington, DC. At any given time, an estimated 3 percent of those driving passenger vehicles on America’s roadways are talking on hand-held cell phones, according to results of a groundbreaking survey conducted by NHTSA. In its newly released research report, NHTSA estimates that 500,000 drivers

of passenger vehicles (cars, vans, sport utility vehicles and pickups) are talking on hand-held cell phones during any given daytime moment throughout the week. The report is based on an observational survey of drivers conducted in 50 geographic areas.

The research represents the first observational study by NHTSA of active cell phone use by drivers. NHTSA data collectors observed more than 12,000 vehicles between

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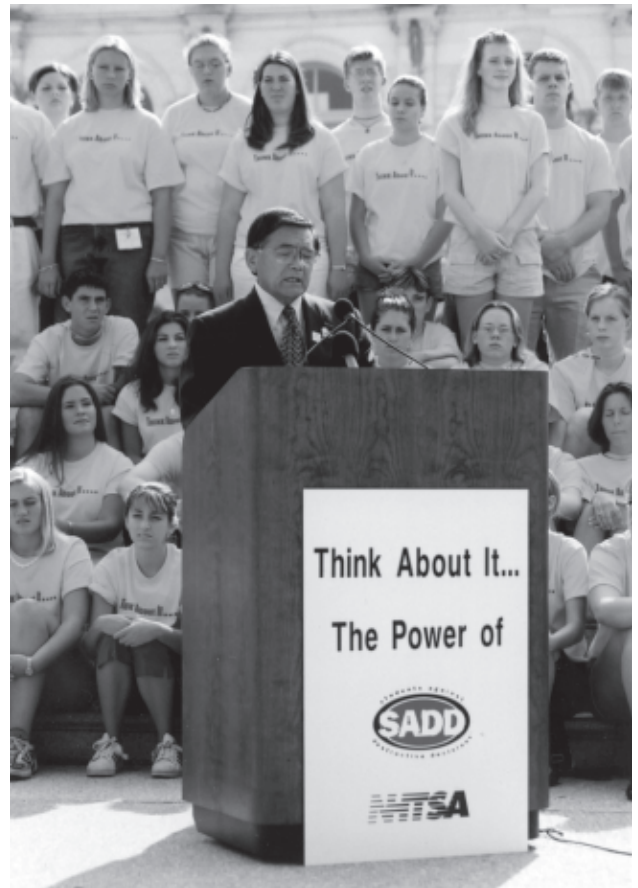
approach. A recently released SADD-Liberty Mutual Insurance Company survey showed a wide gap in parents and their teens’ views on alcohol use and driving. 54 percent of parents expressed concern about drinking and driving, as compared to 82 percent of teens. It also revealed that more than half of the teen respondents report that their parents are extremely influential over their driving behaviors. Teens are more likely to drive safely and less likely to drink if their parents have spoken to them about these behaviors. Using this information and their experience in peer education, the “Think About It” campaign was formed

“SADD uses the power of young people themselves to deliver the message: Making positive decisions and avoiding fatal risks is a difficult task. The problem of underage drinking, drug use, and impaired driving plagues teenagers across the country,” said Student of the Year Justin Weseloh. The new “Think About It” campaign focuses on four times of the year when teens are most at risk, New Year’s, spring break, summer vacation, and at the start of the school year. The campaign hopes to close the communication

gap by partnering youth, parents, schools, law enforcement agencies, and local merchants to implement prevention strategies such as substance-free alternative activities and the promotion of safe driving and riding decisions.

At the close of the ceremony, Secretary Mineta joined SADD in signing their pledge to support a youth alcohol- and drug-free policy. Feeling charged and embraced by the Secretary, the 500 teens left the press conference to meet congressional representatives to garner support. ■

Secretary Mineta speaks at the kickoff event to announce SADD’s “Think About It” campaign.



NHTSA Reports on Major Survey Of Cell Phone Use by Drivers

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8 a.m. and 6 p.m. every day of the week during a period spanning October and November of 2000. Data were collected at 640 intersections. The research covers use rates for hand-held cell phones, not the “hands free” types now used by some drivers. It also does not attempt to assess the contribution of cell phone use to traffic crashes, though NHTSA data indicate that some form of driver distraction is a contributing factor in 20 to 30 percent of all crashes.

The highest use rate observed during the survey (8 percent) was by drivers of vans and SUVs during non-rush hours. Use rates by drivers of all types of passenger vehicles were almost twice as high during non-rush hours as during rush hours. Female drivers were observed using a cell phone more frequently than male drivers. This was especially true for female drivers of vans and SUVs, where use rates were nearly twice as high as male drivers (6.1 percent compared to 3.2 percent).

There was little difference in cell phone use by drivers in the “young adult” age group (16 to 24) versus the “adult” age group (24 to 69). However, use by “seniors” (ages 70 and over) was much less (1.4 percent versus the



national use rate of 3 percent). Finally, use by drivers classified as “white” was higher than use by drivers classified as “black” or of “other races” (3.7 percent compared to 2.3 percent and 1.7 percent respectively). Overall, cell phone use rates were slightly higher in suburban areas than in rural areas (3.4 percent compared to 3 percent).

For the nation as a whole, the survey shows that cell phone use rates were highest for drivers of vans and SUVs and lowest for those driving pickup trucks. Drivers of vans and SUVs also had the highest use rates in the

Midwest and South. In the Northeast, use rates for passenger car drivers and the drivers of vans and SUVs were essentially the same. In the Midwest and West, drivers of pickups had higher use rates than did passenger car drivers.

Cell phone use by drivers was higher on weekdays than on weekends. On weekends, the use rate for drivers of pickups exceeded the use rates of drivers of passenger cars and the drivers of vans and SUVs. On weekdays, use rates by drivers of vans and SUVs was higher than that of drivers of other vehicles.

The 2000 Motor Vehicle Occupant Safety Survey, a phone survey conducted by NHTSA from November 2000 to January 2001, estimated that 54 percent of drivers “usually” have some type of wireless phone in their vehicle with them. Fifty-five percent of these drivers reported that their phone is on during “all” or “most” of their trips and 73 percent reported using their phone while driving.

The newly released research on cell phone use rates by drivers was conducted along with NHTSA’s “National Occupant Protection Use Survey,” an observational study of seat belt use that has been conducted by NHTSA periodically since 1994.

Results of NHTSA’s observational study on cell phone use are available in a research note at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/nca>. The overall estimate of driver hand-held cell phone use has a margin of error of one percentage point. ■

NHTSA Holds Public Meeting to Address the Development of a Strategic Booster Seat Education Plan

By Tami Levitas and Jennifer Knight,
Traffic Safety Programs

The Transportation Recall Enhancement, Accountability and Documentation (TREAD) Act mandates that the Secretary of Transportation “develop a 5-year strategic plan to reduce deaths and injuries caused by failure to use the appropriate booster seat in the 4- to 8-year-old age group by 25 percent.”

Close to 100 people attended a public meeting on July 10, 2001 for the purpose of addressing the development of this strategic booster seat education plan. The public meeting consisted of speakers presenting their points of view, as well as questions and comments from a NHTSA panel and the audience. The intent of the meeting was to share viewpoints, information and ideas on this topic among members of the public, industry, government, and child advocacy groups.

Information presented included statistics, photos, ideas concerning how to educate the public about booster seat use, how to market the information, target audiences, challenges, program effectiveness and evaluation, to name a few.

From the speakers presentations, questions from the panel and audience, and comments received through the public docket, the strategic education plan will be developed with a target date of November 1, 2001.

The distinguished speakers included:

Dr. Flora Winston
Principal Investigator,
Partners for Child Passenger Safety,
Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia

Dr. Sue Ferguson
Senior Vice President for Research,
Insurance Institute for Highway Safety

Dr. Lucy Weinstein, MPH
Medical Coordinator, Injury Prevention,
Winthrop University Hospital,
Long Island Regional Poison Control Ctr.

Ms. Sue Hirtz
Manager, Texas Children’s Health Plan,
Center for Childhood Injury Prevention

Mr. Bob Wall
IACP Operation Kids & Chief Challenge
Director,
International Association of Chiefs of Police

Ms. Lorrie Walker
Statewide Child Passenger Safety and
Resource Center Administrator,
Funded by the Florida Department of
Transportation

Ms. Karen DiCapua
Director of Child Passenger Safety,
National SAFE KIDS Campaign

Ms. Sarah Kirkish
Auto Safety Engineer,
Ford Motor Company



Approximately 100 people attended the hearing on July 10.



Pictured from left to right: Rose McMurray, Associate Administrator, Traffic Safety Programs; John Womack, Acting Chief Counsel; Adele Derby, Associate Administrator, State and Community Services; Ray Owings, Associate Administrator, Research and Development; George Mouchahoir, Safety Performance Standards, Special Vehicle and Systems Division; Cathy Gotschall, Plans and Policy.

Dr. Domenic Kinsley
Editor-in-Chief,
Learning Works

Having children in this age group properly restrained is an important issue because:

- Appropriate restraint use decreases as children get older
- More than half of children aged 4–8 involved in fatal crashes were completely unrestrained.
- Children ages 4–8 account for 25% of all fatalities among children under age 15. In CY 1999 that was about 500 fatalities.

While all states currently have child restraint laws, there is no consistency among the laws. Through consistent laws, education, partnerships with industry, and public involvement, NHTSA anticipates the published plan will lead to an increase in booster seat use. The strategic plan will focus on improving consumer awareness of the safety benefits of booster seats use, the importance of using booster seats, as well as enforcing the laws in those states that have upgraded their child restraint law to include booster seats. ■

Black Entertainment Television Promotes Buckle Up America to Urban Youth

By Craig Killgo, Traffic Safety Programs

A life-saving partnership with Black Entertainment Television (BET) is promoting the goals of the national *Buckle Up America (BUA)* campaign to the African American community. This national initiative reinforces NHTSA's commitment to develop targeted public awareness and information campaigns for all minority populations. It also demonstrates the agency's expanding diversity outreach program which works diligently to reach all segments of diverse communities.

BET and NHTSA are launching a new national safety belt campaign — *Stop, Think, and Live*. BET popularized this phrase among urban teens during the past two seasons on its nationally televised youth talk show, *Teen Summit*. This catchy urban phrase instructs

teens to make responsible life decisions by taking a moment to *Stop, Think, and Live*. The campaign is targeting urban teens, especially young black males (ages 15–24). This group continues to be over-represented in fatal motor vehicle crashes. Below average seat belt usage has been identified as a common factor to their sustaining severe injuries and/or death.

Targeting and reaching this segment of the population with traditional mainstream communication approaches has been a challenge for NHTSA. So the creative designers and artists at BET approached this effort as an *urban marketing* campaign. This approach utilizes credible spokespersons to communicate vital information in alternative formats that include rap music, music videos, poetry recital, and abstract print art. BET has successfully employed this advertising and

marketing approach in several national public health initiatives targeting African American youth. These campaigns have been successful in reaching urban youth in their communities.

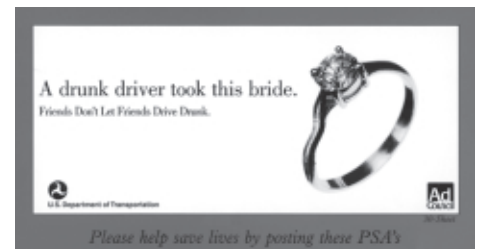
To effectively market this campaign to an urban youth audience, BET involved their young teen actors and host from its *Teen Summit* show. Their visual images and presence help express important symbols and cultural characteristics of today's urban youth. Popular clip art featuring vibrant colors and trendy fashion helped to reinforce the urban youths' style. BET incorporated this into traffic safety facts and information utilizing a very innovative graphic layout design similar to a compact disc (CD) cover. The creative design layout helps draw the audience's attention to positive behaviors that reinforce seat belt usage. Graphic artists and designers incorporated secondary messages that promote pertinent facts about teen crash fatalities. Other photos include very hip urban models that attract the reader's attention to relevant crash facts and information.

The partnership is striving to help the department reach its *Buckle Up America* goal of 90 percent seat belt usage by 2005. If African Americans increase seat belt usage to 100 percent, an estimated 1,300 lives would be saved and 26,000 injuries prevented annually. The *Stop, Think, and Live* campaign ultimately is intended to foster positive changes in attitude, knowledge, and behaviors that will help promote seat belt usage as a daily priority within the African American community. ■



Sold Out!

The Ad Council reports a new record for clearing inventory of 30-sheet outdoor prints; 4,000 of the new "Innocent Victim's" Campaign outdoor boards were requested within two weeks. The billboards are scattered throughout the nation, and outdoor vendors donate the space to the Ad Council and NHTSA. ■



QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"...gradual change is usually more fruitful in the long run than is forced, ultra-aggressive upheaval. Undertaken wisely, steady transitions cultivate authenticity, groundedness, and virtues—like patience, compassion (for self and others), and perseverance. All these qualities improve your probability of success when, ultimately, you do figure out how to actualize your personal vision."

—Marsha Sinetar

NHTSA Now is an official publication of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Office of Public and Consumer Affairs.

Kathryn Henry
Editor

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