



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

NEWS

ROD R. BLAGOJEVICH – GOVERNOR

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

January 17, 2008

CONTACTS:

Abby Ottenhoff		312/814.3158
Rebecca Rausch		217/782.7355
Brian Williamsen	(IDOT)	217/558.0517
Mike Claffey	(IDOT)	312/814.3957
Kate Dennis	(Ford)	313/203.7274
Agnes Norwich	(Allstate)	847/667.8017

Gov. Blagojevich announces 105 winning schools for *Operation Teen Safe Driving* initiative

Grants to be awarded to schools, where students created innovative programs for reducing teen crashes and fatalities.

SPRINGFIELD – Governor Rod R. Blagojevich, along with Secretary of State Jesse White, the Governors Highway Safety Association, the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT), Ford Motor Company Fund, The Allstate Foundation, and supporters of *Operation Teen Safe Driving* are proud to announce 105 winning entries from Illinois high schools, for the statewide safety initiative. Announced in November 2007, *Operation Teen Safe Driving* is a statewide program designed to help Illinois high schools implement local teen-led safe driving campaigns to decrease the number of fatalities and crashes involving teenagers in Illinois.

More than 220 high schools submitted applications, and after a thorough selection process, 105 schools have been chosen to receive grant money to implement their programs.

“Students at these schools went above and beyond in coming up with ways to educate their peers about safe driving and we look forward to seeing these schools move forward with their plans,” said Governor Blagojevich. “Illinois leads the nation in putting tough new laws in place designed to save the lives of teen drivers, and now our teens are getting personally involved in these efforts.”

A listing of the 105 winning schools is available on the program’s Web site, www.buckleupillinois.org. Click on the *Operation Teen Safe Driving* link. This will bring up the *Operation Teen Safe Driving* Web site. From there, click on the “Winning Schools” link. This will take you to an interactive map, which will allow you to narrow down schools by county, and then select individual schools. Contact information for each winning school will be provided.

The Office of the Governor, the Illinois Secretary of State, IDOT's Division of Traffic Safety, the Illinois State Police, the Illinois State Board of Education, and the Illinois Liquor Control Commission in partnership with the Ford Motor Company Fund and The Allstate Foundation are all backing the *Operation Teen Safe Driving* program. Also supporting the Illinois campaign are the Governors Highway Safety Association, RADD ("The Entertainment Industry's Voice for Road Safety"), and SADD (originally founded as "Students Against Drunk Driving" and now standing for "Students Against Destructive Decisions").

Operation Teen Safe Driving is a statewide initiative that is modeled on the nationally recognized *Ford Driving Skills for Life* high school-based pilot project implemented in 2006 by Ford, the Governors Highway Safety Association, IDOT, the Illinois State Police and local partners that halted an epidemic of 15 teen fatalities in Tazewell County in 2005 and 2006. It is also designed to build on the momentum from new laws aimed at teen drivers, stemming from Secretary of State Jesse White's Teen Driving Task Force that give Illinois some of the most stringent teen driving laws in the nation.

"The new law that resulted from the recommendations of my Teen Driver Safety Task Force makes Illinois' teen driver program one of the strongest in the nation and, more importantly, will save lives," said Secretary of State Jesse White. "The *Operation Teen Safe Driving* initiative will draw even more attention to the issue of teen driving and to the new law by utilizing the creativity of teens to develop effective safe driving messages for their peers. I would like to congratulate not just the winning high schools, but all schools and students that participated in this important program. Working together, we can save lives and make Illinois roadways safer for all of us."

"Driver safety is the number one priority for the Illinois Department of Transportation, and we are very encouraged to see such progressive safety concepts coming from our high school students," said IDOT Secretary Milton R. Sees. "Teenagers can have a significant impact on their peers, by making them aware of the responsibilities and potential dangers of getting behind the wheel of a car. We are hopeful the ideas these students have come up with will have that impact."

Selection of the winning programs was based on each school's effectiveness in identifying a problem, creativity of proposals in addressing the problem and the program's ability to reach teens and the entire community. Ultimately, high schools that come up with the most creative solutions will be invited to participate in a half-day Ford sponsored "Ride and Drive" safe-driving clinic. These clinics will be taking place in the Chicago area, Central Illinois and Metro-East area. These "Ride and Drive" events feature professional drivers giving young drivers rigorous behind the wheel driving exercises, including: Hazard Recognition/Accident Avoidance, Vehicle Handling/Skid Control and Speed/Space Management.

"On behalf the Ford Driving Skills for Life program, we would like to congratulate and thank all of the 225 Illinois schools who participated in the application process of *Operation Teen Safe Driving*," said Jim Vella, President, Ford Motor Company Fund and Community Services. "The campaigns these students are about to create will increase awareness of this issue to a new level and save lives. Ford is proud to be a part of each step of this initiative."

"The quality of the applications submitted by the schools was impressive," said Dave Prendergast, Assistant Field Vice President for Allstate's Midwest Region and father of a teen

driver. "On behalf of Allstate agents and employees, we applaud all applicants for their commitment to the issue of safe teen driving and look forward to helping students drive positive change in their communities."

"Illinois teens continue to be at great risk of injury or death in vehicle crashes, and often these crashes involve alcohol," said Erin Meluso, President of RADD, the Entertainment Industry's Voice for Road Safety. *Operation Teen Safe Driving* encourages teens to develop their own, age-appropriate peer messages promoting safe, buckled and sober driving. We see this as a great combination that should prove successful in saving the lives of teens and those with whom they share the road in Illinois."

All schools are to be congratulated for their efforts, in submitting applications for the *Operation Teen Safe Driving* initiative. Schools that have not been selected for the funded portion of the program will have the opportunity to take part in a secondary program, where they will be offered technical support, materials (if possible), speakers to help spread their safety message, the same ability to participate online in *Ford Driving Skills For Life*, as well as non-program funded prize money. All schools will have program staff assigned to them, and students will be encouraged to implement the programs they have designed.