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NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 15, 2009

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Parents Who Speak Up Have Safer Teen Drivers

OHS to hold GDL Parent Orientation Programs during National Teen Driver Safety Week (Oct. 18-24)

Dover – Car crashes continue to be the leading cause of death for teenagers, killing nearly 5,000 of our youngest drivers every year. The primary factors leading to these fatal crashes are inexperience, speed, and distractions, particularly those created by other teen passengers. But studies by the Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) show that teens who said their parents set clear rules, paid attention to where they were going and with who and did so in a supportive way, were half as likely to crash, twice as likely to buckle up, 71% less likely to drive while intoxicated, and 30% less likely to use a cell phone while driving.

Sharing information like this is one way the Delaware Office of Highway Safety (OHS) in cooperation with the state’s Teen Driving Task Force, is participating in National Teen Driver Safety Week (NTDSW), October 18 - 24. NTDSW is aimed at raising awareness about teen driver crashes and working together to find solutions.

Another way OHS will share information with parents is through their Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) Parent Orientation Program. OHS is holding one at Lake Forest High School on Thursday October 22nd for the parents of teens going through driver education classes there, though their children are required to attend as well.

“These programs provide an opportunity for a panel of safety experts from OHS, the DMV, the insurance industry, trauma and police to share important information that parents need to know, yet aren’t often aware of, about the state’s GDL laws,” said Andrea Summers, Teen

Driving Program Coordinator and spokesperson for OHS. Contact your school driver education teacher for scheduled programs or to encourage them to schedule one.

Delaware's GDL law, implemented ten years ago in June of 1999, has been the state's most successful tool in reducing crashes involving 16 year old drivers. Crashes involving these teens have been cut in more than half from 1,001 in 1998, to 415 in 2008. The GDL law requires adult supervision of new drivers and places passenger, cell phone and night time driving restrictions upon them until they have gained at least a year of supervised driving experience.

OHS is sharing a variety of tips and tools that parents and teens alike can use to reduce the risk of being involved in a crash. One of these is the new "Novice Driver" magnets and stickers that are available at the State's DMV offices. The bright yellow reflective magnets let other drivers know to be additionally courteous around teens who have just gotten their permits. Extremely useful information for Delaware families can also be found on the Delaware Teen Driving website located at www.Teendriving.dmv.de.gov. The website features videos and testimonials for teens, sample driver tests, traffic safety laws, and safety tips for both teens and parents. Both the website and Novice Driver magnets are products of the Delaware Teen Driver Task Force of which OHS is a member.

Because parental involvement is key in the development of safe drivers, resources on the importance of setting House Rules are highlighted on the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's website. Go to www.nhtsa.dot.gov and type "teen drivers" into the search box at the top left. You'll be directed to "A Comprehensive Approach to Teen Driver Safety." It includes great tips, statistics, TV and radio PSA's, and a fantastic parent resource link labeled Parent's and Teens. View the posters and print them out for your children. View a list of rules that each parent of 16 – 18 year old drivers should address in their house. The rules cover a variety of topics including the dangers of night time driving, and having too many passengers in the vehicle.

Additional Delaware NTDSW activities:

- 1) PSA's recorded by local students will begin airing on WSTW and other Delmarva Broadcasting Stations on Monday the 18th as part of the *Smart Drive* program
- 2) OHS is mailing out information to driver education and wellness center coordinators in high schools about the dangers of underage drinking
- 3) OHS's Community Traffic Safety Program coordinator is re-enforcing the importance of seat belts on Tuesday and Wednesday by painting the Buckle Up Stencil at Caesar Rodney HS and conducting a seat belt presentation at Sussex Central. He will cover impaired driving issues with a demonstration of the SIDNE go kart at the Kent County Cooperative Extension office from 11 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. on Saturday the 24th.

Additional Resources:

- 1) Children's Hospital of Philadelphia "Ride Like A Friend Campaign"
<http://www.chop.edu/youngdrivers> students and schools can visit the "Ride Like a Friend –

Drive Like You Care link and go to the Materials tab. Fliers to download and or print are located at the bottom. Or go to the Share the Drive Community Action Tools link and download the “10 Things People Don’t Know About Teen Driving” PDF.

2) Ford Driving Skills for Life - <https://www.drivingskillsforlife.com/index.php>. Teens can watch videos, read tips, and play interactive games about Hazard Concentration and the 5 o’clock challenge to re-enforce important points on traffic safety. They can sign up to earn points for all the activities they complete and earn prizes too!

3) *Smart Drive*

<http://www.smartdrivede.org/> - Entering its 4th year of operation, SmartDrive is in most Delaware high schools and caters to the junior and senior population with a goal of re-enforcing the good habits they learned as 16 year olds in a fun interactive way. Open to everyone is access to the PSA’s listed under the media Tab on the SmartDrive website.

Last year, 7 teens were killed as drivers or passengers in motor vehicle crashes in the first state. For more information on teen driving safety tips, visit the OHS website at www.ohs.delaware.gov.

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