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NEWS RELEASE

GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF HIGHWAY SAFETY AWARDS TEEN DRIVER SAFETY GRANT TO Mt. Zion High School

(Carrollton, Georgia—January 20, 2010) How many Georgia high schools will make headlines this year when young drivers die at the wheel? Fatal teen crashes will plunge entire Georgia communities and their student populations into sudden periods of grief and disbelief because car crashes remain the **Number One** cause of death for teens across the country.

Georgia Crash Data confirms our youngest drivers, ages 15-to-19, have the highest rate of crashes, injuries and fatalities--Higher than adult or elderly drivers. During 2008, this 15-to-19 year old driver age group was involved in more than 85-thousand crashes on Georgia roadways that resulted in nearly 14-thousand injured teens and 134 teen highway deaths.

Tragically, the most recent 2008 DOT crash data shows 41% of those Georgia teens who were killed or seriously injured weren't wearing safety belts. The inexperience and immaturity of these younger drivers is believed to be a major contributing factor in their higher fatality rate.

This is where Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) can make a life or death difference in our schools. As part of an ongoing program to involve students in efforts to reduce injury and death to young drivers, the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS) has awarded a] highway safety grant to Mt Zion High School, Mt Zion, GA] to enhance their existing SADD chapter. GOHS believes that student involvement in highway safety solutions like SADD can help reduce the problem of teen driver fatalities in Georgia.

"The Governor's Office of Highway Safety is committed to changing the tragic trend of teen driver deaths in Georgia," said GOHS Director Bob Dallas. "The fact is that the rate of teen driver deaths in Georgia and across the country needs to change and it needs to change now. I believe this active SADD chapter at **Mt Zion High School]** can help us achieve our lifesaving goal of lowering teen driver crash, injury and fatality rates statewide. Who better to help address the challenges and dangers of teen driving than teens themselves? I'm confident these SADD student safety advocates can help convince their peers to be safer, more conscientious drivers."

With this comprehensive statewide effort GOHS and its SADD partners plan to coordinate key teen driving issues including operator inexperience, speed, safety belt use, and impaired driving. Participating schools focus on a variety of highway safety issues throughout the school year.

The **Mt Zion High School** SADD chapter plans to **conduct seat belt surveys, youth driving safety education and training, and alcohol/drug awareness campaigns** during the upcoming

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grant period. In addition, the **Mt Zion High School]** SADD chapter will send its president and advisor to a GOHS statewide leadership-training program to coordinate with other high school SADD chapter representatives. ***For more information about how to obtain a \$2,000 SADD grant contact: Barbara Jones, Governor's Office of Highway Safety, 404-657-9246 or bjones@gohs.ga.gov.***

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