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Secretary Mineta Marks National Child Passenger Safety Week

by **Belinda Rawls,**
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February 11, 2001. U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta today marked the observance of National Child Passenger Safety Week by urging parents and caregivers to put safety first, to buckle up their children correctly when placing them in vehicles, and to have their child safety seats inspected regularly.

The theme of National Child Passenger Safety Week this year is "4 Steps for Kids."

"Children are our most important responsibility and should benefit from the best possible safety protection we can muster. That's why we want parents to learn the four steps to keep their children safe during travel as they grow from infancy," Secretary Mineta said.

National Child Passenger Safety Week, Feb. 11-17, is a national observance to remind

motorists of the importance of buckling up children correctly on every ride. More than 1,700 children, infants to age 14, died in 1999,

and nearly 300,000 are injured in motor vehicle crashes. Six out of 10 children killed in crashes are completely unrestrained. ■



Corazon de mi vida Seeks to Reduce Traffic Fatality Rates Among Hispanic Children

February 14, 2001. Miami, Florida. The National Latino Children's Institute (NLCI) and the Cuban American National Council, along with Nationwide Insurance, launched a national bilingual initiative to inform Hispanic families, childcare providers and the Spanish-speaking community about child passenger safety. Tested in 12 cities with diverse Hispanic populations, *Corazon de mi vida* has proven that Hispanics will respond to messages and buckle up their children when the message speaks to their hearts.

The kick-off in Miami-Dade County at the Day Care Center of the Cuban-American National Council took place, appropriately, on Valentine's Day.

Corazon de mi vida was developed by the National Latino Children's Institute, a non-profit organization that creates a voice for

young Latinos. The words mean "you are the center of my life" and this phrase captures the essence of child passenger safety for Latinos.

"The Hispanic initiative will focus on concerns such as the correct use of seat belts and child safety seats, pedestrian safety, and drinking and driving prevention," said NHTSA spokesman Gabriel Cano. "As the Hispanic community continues to grow, the non-use or misuse of car seats and seat belts is emerging as a significant public health issue."

The death rate from motor vehicle crashes for Hispanic children between the ages of 5 and 12 is 72% greater than the rate for non-Hispanic white children.

Nationwide Insurance is donating dozens of child passenger safety seats to families with children at the Day Care of the Cuban-American National Council. Nationwide Insurance has been



NHTSA Program Analyst Gabriel J. Cano on Univision's national Spanish-language morning show "Despierta America" discussing the *Corazon de mi vida* program.

a strong supporter of NHTSA's efforts nationally to safeguard the lives of Hispanic children through the proper use of child passenger safety seats and donated \$310,000 last year towards the *Corazon de mi vida* initiative and towards the purchase of child passenger safety seats. ■

Nearly all booster-aged children are improperly restrained when riding in motor vehicles.

Skipping the Booster Seat? Might as Well Play With Fire

Lon Anderson, AAA Mid-Atlantic's director of Public Affairs

CONSIDER THESE SCENARIOS: Your inquisitive 4-year-old daughter is sitting by an electrical outlet. You have a metal fork. Planning to hand it to her? Your grandson is 3. He likes to play with what he finds in the cabinets under your kitchen sink. Where will you store the Drano? Your 5-year-old is going for a ride in the car—will she ride in a booster seat?

You're not likely to let small children stick metal objects into outlets or play with dangerous chemicals, but according to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, most parents are putting their booster-aged children in cars without the proper restraint. In fact, NHTSA reports that nearly 94 percent of all kids who should be riding in booster seats are not.

The sad fact is that motor-vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and injury for American children—ranking ahead of all other types of unintentional injuries and claiming more lives than any childhood disease. Injuries from motor-vehicle crashes are also a major cause of epilepsy and paraplegia in children. In fact, the American Academy of Pediatrics says that the trauma suffered by children riding unprotected in cars involved in crashes is the major cause of death and serious injury threatening children today. That is why all 50 states and the District of Columbia have passed some kind of mandatory child-safety-seat usage laws. (For details on the child-safety-seat laws in your area,

visit aaaworld.com.)

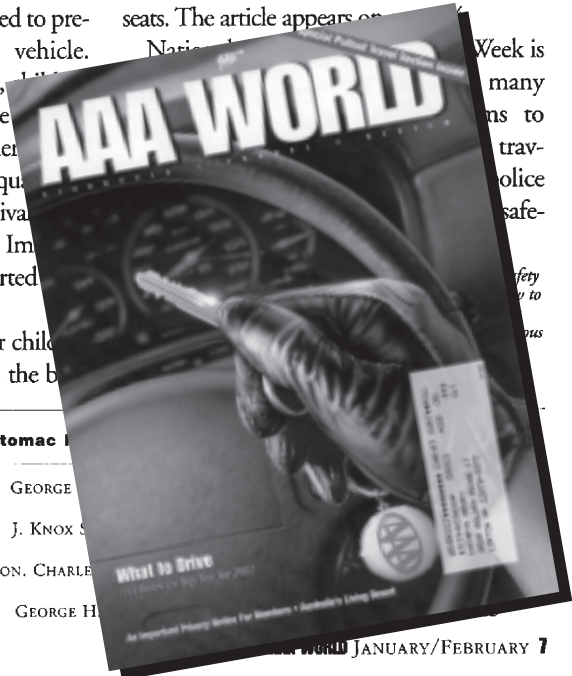
For babies, parents seem to be aware of the importance of proper restraint. According to NHTSA, from birth to age 1, 97 percent of infants are restrained in a rear-facing child safety seat. Ninety-one percent of children ages 1 to 4 are restrained in forward-facing safety seats.* But once children grow out of those forward-facing seats, restraint use falls off dramatically.

Everyone riding in a motor vehicle needs to be protected from hitting the vehicle's interior in case of a sudden stop, swerve or crash. They also need to be restrained to prevent being ejected from the vehicle. Unrestrained, in a 30-m.p.h. crash, a child may be thrown forward with a force of 30 times their own weight. In other words, a 10-pound infant at 30 m.p.h. equals 300 pounds of force, which is the equivalent of falling from a three-story building. Imagine then, the force that would be exerted on a 60-pound child.

Many parents perceive that their children are safe enough if they're riding in the back

seat of the car with a seat belt on. While those impulses are good, parents should remember that children under 80 pounds and 4'9" tall are too small for regular adult seat belts. The lap belt rides up over the stomach and the shoulder belt cuts across the neck. In a crash, this can cause critical or even fatal injuries.

Parents should start putting their children in booster seats when they reach a weight of about 40 pounds, around the age of 4. Children should continue in booster seats until they are 4'9" tall and about 80 pounds. For some children, that may mean using some form of booster seat into early adolescence. Understanding that it's enough of a challenge negotiating booster seat use with younger kids, we've put together some ideas on how to convince children to use booster seats. The article appears on page 10.



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AAA WORLD JANUARY/FEBRUARY 7

NHTSA and NOBLE Team up to Address Seat Belt Use in Minority Communities

by Joseph Akers, NOBLE

February 6, 2001. Washington, D.C.

Increasing seatbelt use in diverse communities is the best way to fight the “public health crisis” of African American traffic fatalities, said officials of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE) attending the symposium entitled, “Achieving Increased Seat Belt Use in Diverse Communities: The Law Enforcement Role.”

Research by Meharry Medical College shows motor vehicle crashes are the top killer of African American children under 15 and are the second leading cause of death for youths 15–24, yet only 66 percent of African Americans buckle up regularly.

“We support the strict enforcement of passenger safety laws,” said NOBLE National President Ida L. Gillis at a press conference. “We are in a crisis, too many of our kids are losing their lives or being seriously injured, needlessly.”

In December, a blue ribbon panel appointed by former Transportation Secretary Rodney Slater recommended that the government take bold steps to increase compliance of seatbelt laws as a means of lowering highway deaths.

After reviewing the findings, NOBLE and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) quickly organized a two-day summit attended by many of the nation’s top black law enforcement officials.

Slater commended NOBLE for its efforts, which he said will make a difference. “There is no time in the nation’s history when our transportation system on the whole has been safer, but we use this as a foundation upon which to build, to make the system even safer,” Slater said.

He also endorsed the blue ribbon panel’s encouragement of improved cooperation

between African American communities and public safety officers to eliminate the possibility of bias-based policing by some officers in the enforcement of seat belt laws.

Gillis, inspector-in-charge for the Northern Illinois Division of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service, acknowledged concerns by civil rights groups that stepped-up enforcement of seatbelt laws could be used as a

mandate by some police officers to make improper or unlawful searches of minorities.

While racial profiling is a potential danger, Gillis said, “we think you can do both: you can enforce the law and you can protect individual civil liberties and not violate them.”

“This symposium would not have been possible without the hard work and commitment of the dedicated staff at NHTSA” she said.

Gillis went on to say, “while most of our interaction is with the Office of Traffic Injury Control Programs, this was truly a team effort on the part of NHTSA, and we extend a special thank you to all involved.” ■



NOBLE President Ida Gillis presents desk plaques to Marilena Amoni, Director, Office of Traffic Injury Control Programs; and Chuck Peltier, Division Chief, Traffic Law Enforcement for NHTSA’s outstanding support of the symposium.

Are you Buckling Up Your Children *Correctly*?

by Alicia Lowe, Traffic Safety Programs

Child Passenger Safety Week. February 11–17.

Do you buckle up your children? Do you buckle them up *correctly*? Too many parents don’t use the full range of child safety seats, especially booster seats, that could save their child’s life. Most parents don’t even realize the importance of changing child safety seats as their children grow!

Safety experts strongly recommend that children should not be moved into regular seat belts until they are 4 feet 9 inches, 80 pounds or over, and/or at least 8 years old. Standard seat belts can pose great danger to children that don’t meet these height, weight, and age criterion.

Seat belts are designed for adults. On a small child, the adult lap belt rides up over the stomach and cuts across the child’s neck. In a crash this can cause serious or fatal injuries. In a roll-over situation, a small child may even be ejected when a seat belt is the only restraint system used.

There are four steps to keeping kids safe in a vehicle: rear-facing child safety seats (birth to at least 20 pounds and one year of age); forward-facing safety seats (for children between 20 and 40 pounds or four years of age); belt-positioning safety seats (for children 40 to 80 pounds and 4’9”); and seat belts only when children reach a safe height and weight to fit into them correctly.

Despite best intentions, following these

four steps sometimes isn’t enough. 96% of those parents and caregivers that *are* aware of the importance of child safety seats and booster seats, fail to implement the safety devices effectively.

For these reasons, NHTSA is trying to raise awareness regarding the importance of child safety seats and booster seats during National Child Passenger Safety Week 2001. Between February 11 and 17, certified child passenger safety technicians will be available at over 1,000 locations across the country to consult with parents and care givers as well as inspect installed child seats.

Please take the time to find the child safety seat inspection location nearest you by visiting www.nhtsa.dot.gov and clicking on “Child Safety Seat Inspections.” Or call 1-888-DASH-2-DOT. Make sure that your children are buckled in right! ■

Louisiana Athlete Lends Support to State's *You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* Campaign

by Sue Ryan, Traffic Safety Programs



Louisiana was one of five states to receive a \$1M grant in FY 2000 to implement a highly visible enforcement campaign on impaired driving. During this past December, during National Drunk and Drugged Driving Prevention Month and the *You Drink and Drive. You Lose.*

mobilization period, a young Louisiana athlete lent his support to the campaign by being featured in a public service announcement. Two years ago, 20-year old Eric Searcy's dreams of pitching in a college world series game were shattered and his life almost taken during a drunk driving crash in Lafayette, Louisiana, that left him a quadriplegic. At 1 a.m. on the morning of December 5, 1998, Searcy was riding in the back seat of a friend's

car that was hit broadside when a drunk driver fell asleep at the wheel. The 27-year-old male driver had seven prior DWI arrests and two DWI convictions. Just the day before, Searcy had learned that he would be playing baseball for the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, a goal he had been pursuing most of his childhood. "My life was perfect. I had no complaints in life. And because somebody just couldn't wait for his friends to leave a bar, he changed my life forever." Now the Baton Rouge resident is dedicated to warning others, particularly young people, about the consequences of drinking and driving. One way Searcy is spreading the word is by taking part in the *You Drink and Drive. You Lose.*

campaign that is being implemented by the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission and the State Police, and he is featured in a public service announcement for the program.

The *You Drink and Drive. You Lose.* campaign and enforcement demonstration in Louisiana has generated a greater awareness

towards DWI enforcement by various law enforcement agencies throughout the state. The period of July 1, 2000 through December 15, 2000 resulted in the following enforcement activity:

DWI Arrests:	4,686
Tests Conducted:	7,800
Test/Submittals:	4,678
Test/Refusals:	3,122
BAC Readings (.01 to .10)	993
BAC Readings (.101 to .450)	3,686

State Police saturation patrols conducted during October 1, 2000 through December 31, 2000 resulted in the following:

DWI Arrests:	262
SFSTs Conducted:	530
Test/Submittals:	184
Test/Refusals:	84
Average BAC:	.142
DRE Evaluations:	6

Sobriety Checkpoints conducted during the same period resulted in 2,272 drivers interviewed, 30 DWI arrests, and 170 SFSTs conducted.

The other states participating in the highly visible enforcement demonstrations are: Texas, Georgia, Tennessee, and Pennsylvania. ■

U.S. Transportation Secretary Mineta Announces Results of Seat Belt Study

by Rae Tyson,
Office of Public and Consumer Affairs

Use is Up but Varies by Region

While seat belt use was up slightly to 71 percent in 2000, a new study shows wide variations in use depending on vehicle type and the strength of state seat belt laws. There also were significant regional differences, with Western motorists registering the highest rate of seat belt use in the nation, according to the study by NHTSA.

A related NHTSA study found that three-point seat belts reduced fatalities by 45 percent in passenger car crashes and 60 percent in light truck crashes. Fatality reduction is as high as 80 percent in some types of crashes, such as rollovers involving vans, sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks.

The study found that seat belt use increased from 67 percent in 1999 to a record

high of 71 percent in 2000. Seat belt use has increased steadily since 1995 when the use rate was 58 percent. But NHTSA's National Occupational Protection Use Survey (NOPUS) found wide variations in 2000. The variations included the following:

- Seat belt use in states with tougher standard (primary enforcement) laws averaged 77 percent while states with weaker secondary laws averaged 64 percent.
- At 80 percent belt use, the West registered the highest regional average while the Northeast was lowest at 67 percent. Seat belt use in the Midwest was 68 percent while use in the South was 69 percent.
- An average of 74 percent of car occupants used seat belts while pickup drivers and passengers averaged 59 percent. Together, occupants of vans and sport utility vehicles averaged 74 percent belt use. Overall, drivers were more likely to buckle up

(72 percent) than passengers (68 percent).

- The lowest rate of seat belt use in the nation was found among pickup occupants in the Northeast (45 percent) while car drivers and passengers in the West registered the highest (83 percent).

This NHTSA seat belt survey has a margin of error of three percentage points.

In addition to overall fatality reductions attributed to seat belts, a separate NHTSA occupant protection study found the following:

- Three-point seat belts are effective in almost all types of crashes. For example, they reduced fatalities by 60 percent in cars and 64 percent in light trucks when the vehicle struck a fixed object.
- In rollover crashes, seat belts are especially effective because 69 percent of all car fatalities and 78 percent of light truck deaths in these crashes involved ejection of the unbelted occupant from the vehicle.

Additional information on both studies is available on the NHTSA web site at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov>. ■

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

The man who goes farthest is generally the one who is willing to do and dare. The sure-thing boat never gets far from shore.

—Dale Carnegie, 1999-1955,
American Author, Trainer