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Highway Checkpoint Strikeforce Debuts for July Fourth Holiday

Multi-State Blitz to Enforce Laws Against Impaired Driving

June 27, 2002. Washington, DC. Checkpoint Strikeforce, a coalition including NHTSA, state and local transportation authorities, and law enforcement agencies from the mid-Atlantic states, launched the region's first state-through-state sobriety checkpoint blitz. This unprecedented border-through-border law enforcement effort began June 28, in time for the heavy traffic anticipated throughout the weekend and Fourth of July holiday, and will continue every week through New Year's Day, 2003.

The District of Columbia, and the states of Virginia, Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania and West Virginia are participating in this enforcement effort.

"As an emergency physician, I can tell you firsthand that impaired driving is a tragedy for families all across America. It is a serious and deadly crime that kills every 32 minutes," said NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge. "We know that when communities come together to conduct highly visible enforcement, lives are saved. I commend Checkpoint Strikeforce for being a national model for how federal, state, and local organizations can work together to protect our families every day from impaired drivers."

With record numbers of travelers expected on the nation's highways, this summer could be one of the deadliest periods ever for impaired-driving fatalities. According to a recent NHTSA survey, most Americans are more concerned that drinking and driving will cause harm to their families this July 4th holiday than fireworks, food poisoning, and drowning. The survey also shows that 4 out of 5 Americans support increased enforcement and tougher laws to protect themselves and their families from impaired drivers.

After several years of improvement, recent statistics indicate that alcohol-related

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NHTSA Region 3's Stephanie Hancock participates in a "mock" sobriety check.

United in the Drive to Save Lives

Meharry Medical College and State Farm Insurance Form Alliance to Increase Seat Belt Use Among African Americans

May 31, 2002. Washington, DC.

Motor vehicle crashes are the second leading cause of death among African-American youths, but this public health crisis can be remedied with something as simple as using a seat belt, say the organizers of a new alliance to address the issue.

In a study conducted by Meharry Medical College of Nashville, Tenn. researchers find a disparity in seat belt use among African-

Americans, and that greater use of seat belts and child safety seats among African-Americans would save an estimated 1,300 lives, prevent 26,000 injuries and save \$2.6 billion in societal costs each year.

To combat this public health crisis, Meharry and State Farm Insurance have created the Meharry-State Farm Alliance to study why seat belt and child safety seat use is

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NHTSA and OJJDP Jointly-funded Program “Youth Court” Participate as the Only Youth Program in the United Nations Special Session on Children

By Ruth Esteban-Muir, TSP



The National “Youth Court” Initiative was selected as the only youth program in the United States to participate in the Special Session on

Children of the United Nations on May 8, 2002 in New York City. Over 1,400 people, including government leaders and Heads of State, children’s advocates and youth, gathered at the Special Session to change the way the world views and treats children. Some of the notable participants included Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan; former South African President, Nelson Mandela; Microsoft co-founder, Bill Gates; President of Mexico, Vicente Fox; actors Cicely Tyson, Michael

Douglas and Marc John Jefferies; and UNICEF Goodwill Ambassadors Roger and Kristina Moore and Harry and Julie Belafonte. This worldwide event is held only every ten years. The outcome of the event produced “A World Fit For Children” document.

The Youth Court program was emulated during the session with a focus on children deprived of their liberty in the context of juvenile justice and children in residential care. The program has also been selected to become part of the ten-year world blueprint for children prepared by the United Nations and UNICEF, United Nations Children’s Fund.

Investing since 1994, NHTSA is the originating Federal agency that was responsible for the growth and success of the Youth Court program, also known as teen court. Youth Court is an alternative judicial program in which youth offenders are judged by a jury of their peers. Youth Courts hold youth offenders accountable for their actions, promote restorative justice principles, educate

youth on the legal system, reinforce and empower youth to be active participants in community problem solving, and build good character traits in young people. Youth Court reduces the burden of courts to handle minor youth offenses that may often be handled with “a slap on the wrist” or lost in the system. Youth Court programs offer an opportunity to address delinquent behaviors at their onset.

Rated as one of the top presenters, NHTSA Deputy Administrator Annette Sandberg was the featured guest at the recent “National Youth Court Conference 2002: America’s Youth Justice System” this past April in Arlington, Virginia. Sharing her experience in law enforcement, she spoke before more than 900 youth court program coordinators, youth and adult volunteers, juvenile justice system professionals, and community organizers and advocates about how youth courts help address traffic safety issues, specifically underage drinking. She reiterated the importance of the collaboration between the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Programs (OJJDP) of the U.S. Department of Justice and NHTSA that has strengthened the youth court movement and contributed to its success.

More information about Youth Courts can be found at www.youthcourt.net and the Special Session for Children at www.unicef.org/specialsession. ■

Highway Checkpoint Strikeforce Debuts for July Fourth Holiday

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crashes are on the rise. They cause an estimated 300,000 injuries and cost society over \$45 billion each year. In 2000, 1,438 lives were lost in the region in crashes related to impaired driving.

When sobriety checkpoints were used intermittently throughout the mid-Atlantic region during the past 20 years, the number of alcohol-related crashes was reduced by as much as 20 percent. The Checkpoint Strikeforce blitz will build on previous statewide efforts to create a regional enforcement program aimed at deterring impaired driving and arresting offenders. Sobriety checkpoints will be supplemented with law enforcement saturation patrols and public awareness campaigns as part of the Checkpoint Strikeforce program. The blitz underscores that the majority of Americans support the use of sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols to keep them and loved ones safe from impaired drivers.

Checkpoint Strikeforce is being conducted in conjunction with the July 4th holiday “*You Drink & Drive. You Lose.* National Mobilization.” Since 1999, national mobilizations are conducted during July and

December to highlight the dangers of impaired driving and to mobilize criminal justice and

traffic safety partners in all 50 states to conduct sobriety checkpoints and saturation patrols, all aimed at keeping Americans safe from this serious and deadly crime. For more information about Checkpoint Strikeforce and the National Mobilization, visit the NHTSA Web site at www.nhtsa.dot. ■



NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge launches Checkpoint Strikeforce on the National Mall.

United in the Drive to Save Lives

Meharry Medical College and State Farm Insurance Form Alliance to Increase Seat Belt Use Among African Americans

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lower among African Americans, then use the information to increase seat belt use through culturally appropriate educational material and public awareness campaigns.

The Meharry-State Farm Alliance will conduct community-based research to assess knowledge, attitudes and behaviors about seat belt and child safety seat use in the African-American community and test different methods to change behavior. It will translate findings into culturally appropriate educational materials, which will reach a variety of audiences through community health centers, physician and dentist offices, and other community-based organizations such as churches, schools, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), and the media.

"Over the course of its 125-year history, Meharry has established its leadership in identifying and addressing the disparities in morbidity and mortality between African Americans and other underserved populations, and the population as a whole. This new alliance furthers our work," said Meharry President John E. Maupin, Jr., D.D.S. "Meharry is pleased to unite with State Farm in the drive to save lives. We know the statistics; it is now time to come together and find the real reasons behind and the solutions to this crisis."

"As a corporate citizen, we feel a strong responsibility to try to find an answer to this overwhelming problem," said Willie Brown, senior vice president of State Farm Insurance. "State Farm customers, agents and employees are a part of every community and we are not willing to stand by while our children, friends and neighbors fall victim to this crisis. We

want to help find ways to increase seat belt and child safety seat use in the black community."

The company has pledged \$10 million over five years to support Meharry's medical and research initiatives on this issue. The Alliance will implement recommendations stemming from a Blue Ribbon Panel, convened in June 2000 by then-Secretary of

Transportation Rodney E. Slater to address the problem. The panel's findings were published as the "Blue Ribbon Panel to Increase Seat Belt Use Among African Americans: A Report to the Nation."

"Meharry Medical College and State Farm have created a national model for a unified effort by a private for-profit company and a private non-profit organization, which is also an historically black college," said U.S. Transportation Secretary Norman Y. Mineta. "This alliance, in collaboration with the federal government, will help persuade more Americans to use seat belts, the most effective safety device in a car." ■



Former Secretary Rodney E. Slater (right) joins Secretary Mineta and leaders from Meharry Medical College and State Farm Insurance at a news conference at the Press Club in Washington, DC.

Finding and Posting Child Safety Seat Inspections Made Easy

GET A FREE CHILD SAFETY SEAT INSPECTION!

1-866-SEAT-CHECK

www.seatcheck.org

CONNECT • INSPECT • PROTECT

There's a new way to help parents find child safety seat inspections. Last February, NHTSA joined the Chrysler Group, the National Safety Council, Graco Children's Products Inc., and Lamaze (International) to launch *SeatCheck*. *SeatCheck* is a comprehensive listing of child safety seat inspection locations and check-up events nationwide. It

includes a toll-free hotline dedicated exclusively to directing parents to local child safety seat inspection resources (**1-866-Seat-Check** or **1-866-732-8243**). It also includes a web site, www.seatcheck.org, which complements the hotline. Both are available in English and Spanish.

SeatCheck also offers technicians a new way to post and promote their child safety seat inspection sites and events. By adding inspection listings to the *SeatCheck* web site, events and inspection sites are automatically added to the database and offered to parents that inquire about sites in their area. *SeatCheck*'s web site builds upon NHTSA's existing and highly acclaimed inspector locator service web site.

With more than 3,000 safety seat inspection locations and events nationwide, spreading the word about this resource is critical. *SeatCheck* is being promoted through a national advertising campaign, public service announcements, grass roots outreach, and safety and health care community liaisons. Supported by the Chrysler Group, these promotions are already driving up calls to the toll-free hotline and visits to the web site.

SeatCheck was launched in response to a survey, which found that four out of ten parents and caregivers do not know how to find a child safety seat inspection location. The survey also found that use of a toll-free number is a parent's first method of choice to find child passenger safety information. With telephone access available in 94 percent of U.S. households, the hotline will give nearly every family access to this lifesaving resource.

For more information about *SeatCheck*, please call Suraya DaSante at 248-512-4889. ■

Vince and Larry's Big Day at the White House

By Jennifer Hogan, TSP

June 20, 2002. The White House. President Bush held the *White House Fitness Expo* to launch a new national initiative designed to help Americans live healthier lives. In an address on the South Lawn, he said, "when America and Americans are healthier, our whole society benefits. If you're interested in improving America, you can do so by taking care of your own body." Four guideposts lead the way in the Healthier US initiative: Americans should be physically active every day, develop good eating habits, have preventative screenings, and refrain from smoking, using drugs, and drinking excessively. More information is available at www.healthier.us.gov.

NHTSA's own Vince and Larry were a big hit at the expo. Children and adults both love getting their picture snapped with these two, who had their usual requests for countless poses. The highlight of their day, however, was a photo with First Lady Laura Bush. These two well-known figures also worked diligently on this sunny day to bring



First Lady Laura Bush with Vince and Larry.

visitors over to NHTSA's information booth. NHTSA's interactive exhibit provided information on bicycle and pedestrian safety, child passenger safety seats, and buckling up. Children and parents, grandparents, or caregivers stopped by the exhibit to pick up such items as bike reflectors and reflector bracelets for jogging or walking. Based on the hundreds of smiling children investigating the various health and fitness exhibits, the event was a great success. ■

Walking the line at the "Walk and Roll"

By Jennifer Hogan, TSP

Have you ever heard a friend say, "A couple of drinks doesn't affect me at all"? On May 30th, DOT employees had a chance to test for themselves just how impairment affects even the simplest activity, such as walking along a straight line. At the TASC Worklife Wellness Second Annual Walk & Roll event held in the DOT plaza, Fairfax County police brought fatal vision goggles to demonstrate and simulate impairment. Officers set up a basketball hoop, an obstacle course, and a straight line, and had employees try out the vision goggles. Not only was it entertaining to see colleagues stumble off of the line, but it also gave employees a chance to safely experience impairment and its deteriorating effect on balance and motor skills. The Washington D.C. police were also present demonstrating the breath alcohol testing instruments by allowing employees to try it out.

NHTSA set up an exhibit on traffic safety programs. Employees stopped by to ask



NHTSA's Jim Wright "Walking the Line!"

questions about car seat safety, parents and grandparents took home games on traffic safety for children, and cyclists and motorcyclists alike could pick up safety information. Vince and Larry could also be seen working the crowd. In addition to NHTSA's contribution, a variety of booths on wellness for over 800 attendees made this event a great success. ■

The Current School Year has Ended

Another school year has ended for a summer break. Not just for school children, but for NHTSA's few.

Some of NHTSA's staff are volunteers under the DOT Partnership-in-Education Agreement with the Lemon G. Hine Junior High School located on Capitol Hill. They volunteer once a week, assisting students in The Friends Program. NHTSA's volunteers, Plina Doyle, Tonya Lindsey, Margaret Cauthorne, Sharon Scott, and Lorenzo Daniels serve as adult mentors to students designated as "high risk" students.



Pictured from left to right, front row: Lorenzo Daniels (NHTSA), Sharon Scott (NHTSA), Gwenda Caliborne (FAA), Margaret Cauthorne (NHTSA.) Rear: Tonja Lindsey (NHTSA), Maurice Austin (FAA), Craig Owens (OST), Plina Doyle (NHTSA), and Charlotte Bryan (FAA).

Several other programs were instituted in 1984, as part of the DOT partnership:

- **Tutoring Program** – employees volunteer to serve as tutors to students in all subject areas.
- **Lecture Series** – employees lecture to students about the mission and role of transportation.
- **Cultural Enrichment Activities** – Hine students are invited to participate in the many cultural activities sponsored by the Department throughout the year.
- **The Hine JHS Emergency Fund** – through funds raised at the Annual Spring Fundraiser, DOT contributes to Hine Fundraisers and provides Giant and Safeway receipts to obtain educational supplies and equipment for the school. ■

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QUOTE OF THE MONTH

"You cannot succeed by yourself. It's hard to find a rich hermit."

-Jim Rohn, American Businessman, Author, Speaker, Philosopher