



U.S. Department  
of Transportation  
**National Highway  
Traffic Safety  
Administration**

# NHTSA NOW

Volume 10, No. 4

May 4, 2004

## 2004 Lifesavers Conference on Highway Safety Priorities a Huge Success

by Robin Mayer, Office of Communications and Consumer Information



*Pictured from left to right: Georgia Chakiris (Region VI); Marilena Amoni; Bill Naff (Region III); Debbie Boykin; NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge; Ken Quintana (Region IV); Secretary Norman Mineta; Jack Champlin (Region IX); Sam Haiman (Region II).*

More than 1,800 traffic safety professionals gathered in San Diego, California, March 28-30 to learn about the latest programs, priorities, and technologies designed to improve traffic safety across the country. This year's Lifesavers conference was the largest in its 22-year history, not only in terms of participants, but in exhibits as well.

Participants had their choice of more than 80 workshops that focused on adult occupant protection, child passenger safety, criminal justice, data and research, impaired driving, and other highway safety priorities.

Highlights of the conference included presentations by NHTSA Administrator Jeffrey W. Runge, M.D. and Secretary of Transportation Norman Y. Mineta. Dr. Runge unveiled NHTSA's new impaired driving intervention program, which focuses on high visibility enforcement; increased emphasis on prosecution and DWI courts; and alcohol screening and brief intervention. He congratulated the traffic safety community for the increases in safety belt use rates, and challenged them to continue to focus on occupant protection and impaired driving programs. Secretary Mineta reiterated the Administrator's and Department's commitment to traffic safety as its number one priority and, specifically, occupant protection, as the primary method to keep Americans safe on the roadways.

While at the Lifesavers conference, Dr. Runge and Secretary Mineta took time to tour the exhibit hall, visiting with long-term traffic safety partners and organizations new to the field, learning of new products, materials, and technology designed to enhance the safety of all roadway users.

# National Alcohol Screening Day A National Success

by Laurie Flaherty, Office of Traffic Injury Control

**April 8, 2004** – The sixth annual observance of National Alcohol Screening Day (NASD) was April 8, and was the most successful NASD to date. NASD raises public awareness about the consequences of risky drinking and alcohol's effect on general health. Through the use of multimedia and thousands of anonymous screening sites, NASD activities seek to identify those with drinking problems, from risky use to alcohol dependence, and get their help to successfully deal with their alcohol use problem. Since its 1999 inception, more than a quarter of a million individuals have participated in NASD.

The amount of earned media this year was substantially increased through numerous "channels." Radio Stations broadcast the NASD message of "Alcohol and Health: Where Do You Draw the Line?" 478 times, reaching an estimated 25,901,507 people. Television carried the message in 83 major markets, and newspaper articles appeared in 23 papers, along with 43 newspaper "briefs." The Internet also had stories on 12 major news outlet sites.

The nation's doctors also joined forces on the public airwaves. The National Institute for Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) sponsored a satellite media tour featuring the U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Richard Carmona was interviewed on screening day and alcohol and public health issues by local television

## Quote of the Month

*"We cannot be happy if we expect to live all the time at the highest peak of intensity. Happiness is not a matter of intensity, but of balance and order and rhythm and harmony."*

– Thomas Merton



*Pictured from left to right: Dr. Ting-Kai Li, Director of NIAAA, Dr. Richard Carmona, U.S. Surgeon General, and Dr. Jeffrey W. Runge, NHTSA Administrator.*

stations across the country. On that same morning, NHTSA Medical Fellow, Dr. Todd Thoma, was interviewed by top local radio stations nationwide on alcohol and highway safety issues. In many communities, trauma surgeons and emergency physicians were interviewed on local radio and television.

Success is largely due to the involvement of the NHTSA Regional staff and the partnerships formed with National Medical Organizations at a February 12<sup>th</sup> meeting in Washington DC. Numerous press events were conducted, with some regions opting for media "tours," partnering with multiple law enforcement and medical experts for interviews. NHTSA Regional staff also recruited their contacts to sponsor alcohol screening sites.

The number of screening sites rose to 6,542 from last year's 4,624 sites, with promotion by the regional offices and the members of the 24 national medical organizations that attended a meeting the above February 12<sup>th</sup> meeting. When Dr. Runge, NHTSA Administrator, explained the urgency to address alcohol-related motor vehicle crashes and shared with the group a national strategy that focuses on alcohol screening and brief intervention, together with highly

visible enforcement and prosecution and DWI courts. Of the three priority strategies, Dr. Runge emphasized the medical community as key partners in implementing alcohol screening and brief intervention. He shared his perspective as NHTSA Administrator as well as his experience doing SBI as an emergency physician, in forming a goal for making SBI part of standard medical practice. The results of that meeting, and the ongoing activities of the 24 national medical organizations will soon be posted on [www.stopimpaireddriving.org](http://www.stopimpaireddriving.org) web site.

Thanks to the efforts of NHTSA and our partners, the number of people screened increased from 44,000 to 62,000, and literally millions of Americans heard the message of how alcohol affects their health, and where to "draw the line." NASD is a project of the nonprofit Screening for Mental Health, Inc., in collaboration with the National Institutes of Health's National Institute for Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), both components of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. More than 50 public and private partners, including NHTSA and the American Medical Association, also support NASD.

# Stanley H. Backaitis Named 2004 SAE Fellow

*By the Office of Vehicle Safety*

the 2004 SAE World Congress, held March 8-11, in Detroit, Michigan.

Mr. Backaitis is recognized for his work in incorporating the complete family of crash test dummies used in automotive safety testing into federally regulated safety standards. This involves defining the types of dummies needed, coordinating the detailed designs, managing the development and testing, and federalizing the necessary specifications, use procedures, and certification tests for incorporation in Federal motor vehicle safety standards.

In addition to his many significant scientific endeavors and contributions, Mr. Backaitis maintains a busy lifestyle. He is an active member of the greater Great Falls, Virginia community, serving as vice president of academic affairs on the Lithuanian American Community leadership executive committee. When he is not serving his peers by directing automotive safety enhancements, or being a sitting juror on a complex murder trial as he did in 2003, he can usually be found playing competitive tennis.

Please join the agency in congratulating Mr. Backaitis for his many achievements over the course of his career with NHTSA, and particularly for his recognition by SAE International as a worldwide expert in the advancement of automotive safety.



*Pictured from left to right: SAE Fellows Roger Daniel (retired Ford), Stan Backaitis, and Bud Mertz (retired GM).*

**WASHINGTON, DC** – April 2004 - Stanley H. Backaitis, Principal Engineer responsible for biomechanics programs in the Office of Crashworthiness Standards, was recently recognized by the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE International) for career achievement with the prestigious status of “SAE Fellow.” Mr. Backaitis has over 34 years of public service with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and has been instrumental in developing and federalizing the new generation of anthropomorphic test devices (crash test dummies).

SAE Fellowship status is the highest grade of membership bestowed by SAE International. It recognizes outstanding engineering and scientific accomplishments by an individual that have resulted in meaningful advances in automotive, aerospace, and commercial vehicle technology and safety. The program, established in 1975, recognizes an average of only 20 worldwide recipients for this honor each year. Mr. Backaitis’ official date of election as an SAE Fellow was September 12, 2003, and he received public recognition among his peers in ceremonies at

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## New Jersey Department of Community Affairs’ and Department of Law and Public Safety “Partner for Traffic Safety”

*by Ann Burton – Region II*

On February 20, the Department of Community Affairs’ (DCA) Center for Hispanic Policy, Research, and Development, in partnership with the Department of Law and Public Safety’s Division of Highway Traffic Safety, awarded a total of \$270,000 to nine Hispanic nonprofit organizations participating in the new “Partnering for Traffic Safety” Program. DCA Commissioner Susan Bass Levin, along with Attorney General Peter Harvey, Roberto Rodriguez, Director of the Division of Highway Traffic Safety, and Thomas Louizou, Region II Administrator

of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, commended the participants for committing to make a difference in the Hispanic Communities.

Monies will be used to develop public education programs geared toward raising awareness of the need to properly restrain children and to provide child safety seats. This program follows a series of leadership meetings conducted in 2003 that informed leaders from diverse communities about the traffic safety problem and provided information on State and local resources.

# GM-SAFE KIDS Program Has Helped Protect More Than 500,000 Children From Death or Serious Injury



**April 2004.** This month, SAFE KIDS BUCKLE UP, the largest and longest running industry supported child safety seat inspection program in history, celebrated a major milestone – their 500,000<sup>th</sup> safety seat inspection.

“Child passenger fatalities and injuries have fallen to historic lows since the program began,” said NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge in a video news release that was made available to television stations throughout the nation. “Though our work is not over, Americans

are grateful to the program for its extraordinary contribution to safety.”

Since 1996, vehicle occupant fatalities among children ages 7 and under have decreased by 25 percent. According to NHTSA, correctly installed child safety seats reduce a child’s chances of dying in a crash by 71 percent for infants and 54 percent for children ages 1 to 4.

The SAFE KIDS BUCKLE UP program uses hundreds of certified child safety seat technicians who undergo four full days of intensive instruction. In all, since the program began, more than 12,300 check up events have been held; nearly 1.3 million people have attended at least one check up event, and the program has donated 268,000 child safety seats to families who need them.

For more information, visit: [www.safekids.org](http://www.safekids.org)

## Congratulations to the Following NHTSA Employees Who Have Achieved Milestones in their Careers

Office of the Administrator	Years of Service
Shirley A. Salo	(20)
<b>Administration</b>	
Pete Shultz	(25)
Jacqueline Hilliard	(30)
<b>Chief Information Office</b>	
Carolyn A. Green	(30)
Jeanette Lee Chow	(25)
<b>Vehicle Safety Research</b>	
John M. Machej	(35)
<b>Rulemaking</b>	
Alan M. Berkowitz	(35)
<b>National Center for Statistics &amp; Analysis</b>	
Christina G. Gibson	(20)
Cheryl L. Schuler	(25)
<b>Enforcement</b>	
Stuart J. Seigel	(20)
<b>Office of Injury of Control Operations &amp; Resources</b>	
Paul B. Snodgrass	(30)

## NHTSA Administrator Dr. Jeff Runge Receives Friends of EMS Award

Dr. Runge received the “Friends of EMS Award” from the National Association of EMS Physicians. The award recognizes the outstanding contribution of a non-NAEMSP member to national emergency medical services development. Dr. Bob Bass, President of the National Association of EMS Physicians and Executive Director of the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems, praised the numerous contributions of Dr. Runge to emergency medical services – both before and during his tenure as NHTSA’s Administrator.

## Terrance D. Schiavone Named NHTSA Region IV Administrator

Beginning May 3, 2004, Terry Schiavone will join NHTSA as Region IV Administrator in Atlanta, Georgia. Mr. Schiavone is an experienced highway safety executive, serving most recently as the Division Director for Transportation Programs in the State of New Mexico, where he was responsible for oversight and direction of the Traffic Safety Bureau and Public Transportation Bureau. Prior to that, he served as President of the National Commission Against Drunk Driving (NCADD) and as the Governor’s Representative for Highway Safety in Massachusetts. Welcome, Terry!

*NHTSA Now* is an official publication of the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Office of Communications and Consumer Information.

Kathryn Henry, Editor

Contributors: Tom Hollowell, Milton Cooper, Office of Vehicle Safety; Ann Burton, Region II; Prentis Kie, NAD; Robin Mayer, OCCI; Laurie Flaherty, NTI; Tina Foley, OCCI.

If you would like to submit articles or photographs, please email them to [khenry@nhtsa.dot.gov](mailto:khenry@nhtsa.dot.gov); or mail them to:

400 7th Street, SW, Suite 5236, Washington, DC 20590.