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SADD YOUTH LEADERS COME TOGETHER TO TACKLE CRITICAL ISSUES FACING TEENS

Washington, D.C. – Over four days next week, nearly 500 students and adult advisors from 33 states will have the opportunity to share, learn, and grow at the 2009 SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) National Conference. SADD students are committed to making teen lives safer, and they will be challenged and inspired during the numerous workshops and other events. The conference is held in a different city each year to afford young people a new cultural experience, and this year's conference is **July 12-15 at the Bethesda North Marriott**. The conference theme, "Climbing the Hill," was chosen by the SADD National Student Leadership Council, which assists in the conference planning and implementation.

"We could not be more excited about the group of students joining us at this year's conference," said Stephen Winkler of Seneca, Kansas, the 2008-2009 SADD National Student of the Year. "Students will have the opportunity to develop leadership and advocacy skills, share ideas, and learn new prevention strategies that can be put into action back home in their schools and communities."

Conference participants will attend motivational presentations, seminars, and activities aimed at exchanging new approaches and gathering ideas that they can share with their communities and develop into events for their local SADD chapters. Craig Tornquist is back by popular demand to serve as the Master of Ceremonies at the conference. Keynote speakers include Ty Sells, who will challenge students to examine the way they treat others and explore the consequences of making decisions based on what is "cool," and Leon Quan, who will speak about the challenges faced by companies and campuses as they look to develop effective leaders. John Morello will present his one-man show "Dirt," which addresses substance abuse, self-esteem, and depression. Patty Hendrickson's high-energy and interactive keynote address will focus on encouraging the audience to examine themselves and take action.

The conference will also include nearly 50 workshops aimed at providing students and advisors with information about serious topics, such as underage drinking, teen violence and suicide, advocacy, driving safety, diversity, and bullying. Conference sponsors include DCH Auto Group, National Automobile Dealers Charitable Foundation, 1 2 1 Direct Response, Miccosukee Tribe of Indians of Florida, Daniel Carter Beard Junior High School, and Buck and Donna Vocelle.

"We are very pleased to have our conference in the nation's capital. This is an opportunity for SADD students to shine on a national stage. There is so much to see and absorb here, and visiting Washington, D.C., can be a life-changing experience, just as the SADD National Conference can be," said SADD Executive Director Penny Wells. "We are thrilled with this truly well-rounded, enthusiastic, and accomplished group of teens who are committed to improving the lives of their peers and to giving back to the community while they are here."

Highlights of the conference include these:

- **Opening Ceremonies** – Sunday, July 12, 7-10:30 p.m.
SADD youth and advisors from 33 states will gather to officially kick off the conference. The evening is organized and led by the Student Leadership Council.
- **Tour of Washington, D.C.** – Monday, July 13, 5:30 p.m.
All conference participants will embark on a memorable nighttime tour of our nation's capital and dinner at the Hard Rock Café. They will explore many of the exciting D.C. landmarks – both old and new!
- **Closing Ceremony/SADD Awards Banquet** – Tuesday, July 14, 7-9 p.m.
SADD will recognize the stellar work of its most dedicated students and advisors by presenting national awards for Chapter of the Year, Activity of the Year, and Advisor of the Year. The Office of the Surgeon General will be recognized with SADD's Outstanding Contribution Award for Academic Excellence for its work to develop *The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Prevent and Reduce Underage Drinking*. Cheryl Neverman, a highway safety specialist with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, will be presented with the SADD Lifetime Achievement Award for her dynamic leadership, enduring passion, and tireless commitment to the health, safety, and well-being of America's youth. In addition, SADD will officially induct its 2009-2010 National Student Leadership Council.
- **Rally on Capitol Hill** – Wednesday, July 15, 9-9:30 a.m.
The conference will conclude with a rally on Capitol Hill to promote youth health and safety issues. The rally will be followed by visits with the students' elected representatives. These visits are an opportunity for students to discuss teen traffic safety issues with their elected representatives.
- **School Supplies Drive** – Sunday, July 12 – Wednesday, July 15
Youth leaders will give back to other students by donating school supplies to benefit a Washington, D.C., school. Supplies ranging from backpacks and book covers to pens, pencils, and paper will be collected during the conference, and special recognition will be given to the group that donates the most supplies.

SADD, the nation's leading peer-to-peer youth education, prevention, and activism organization, is committed to empowering young people to lead initiatives in their schools and communities. Founded in 1981, today SADD has thousands of chapters in middle schools, high schools, and colleges. SADD highlights prevention of many destructive behaviors and attitudes that are harmful to young people, including underage drinking, other drug use, risky and impaired driving, and teen violence and suicide. More information about SADD can be found at sadd.org.

For more information about SADD, visit sadd.org. For more information about the 2009 SADD National Conference, contact Communications Coordinator Stacey Hart at 508-481-3568 or shart@sadd.org.

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