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Contact: Stacey Hart
508-481-3568
shart@sadd.org

Minnesota SADD Students Win National Youth Traffic Safety Contest

Florida SADD Chapter Takes Third Place

Marlborough, Mass. – SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) congratulates students from Anoka, Minnesota, and Coral Springs, Florida, for placing first and third, respectively, in the 2009 “Act Out Loud: Raising Voices for Safe Teen Driving” national contest. Twenty teams of teen activists from across the country competed in the online contest, sponsored by National Organizations for Youth Safety (NOYS), to celebrate May as National Youth Traffic Safety Month.

“We are thrilled and proud that SADD chapters took two of the top three prizes in this national contest. Anoka SADD deserves to be recognized for their unique and effective efforts to promote SADD’s message and empower their friends to make safe, healthy decisions,” said SADD Executive Director Penny Wells. “The innovation, creativity, and dedication of both Anoka and Coral Springs SADD students is truly inspiring.”

Anoka High School SADD will receive a \$10,000 grand prize for their project, “Get the 411 on Teen Driving! Stay Connected! Save Teen Lives.” They have decided to use their grand prize funds to develop a grant application process to disperse the money to other school and community groups eager and willing to educate teens about traffic safety.

As part of their project, the dedicated teens from Anoka created a website, www.teendriver411.com, which includes information about their campaign, their state’s recently passed Graduated Driver Licensing laws and other key safety and driving facts. In addition to

developing video PSAs on texting while driving and limiting the number of passengers in the car, the team challenged University of Minnesota athletes to a safety belt competition. Anoka was recognized during a “Day at the Capitol” and was supported by their local law enforcement, city council, school district, and a host of other organizations.

“Anoka High School SADD is committed to educating our peers and community about traffic safety. Our goal is to eliminate teen fatalities and injuries caused by traffic crashes,” said team captain Natalie Hayford. “The community has embraced our mission by voting for us, and we appreciate the support of citizens, schools, service clubs, and city governments. The community’s support helped us to win this award and now it is our goal to use these funds to continue our work and support other youth programs in our community addressing youth traffic safety.”

Coral Springs Charter School SADD will receive \$3,000 for its third place finish. Students focused on the importance of being safe and responsible drivers and encouraged everyone to sign a pledge to be a “safe driver now and forever.” The team developed a video highlighting their activities over the contest period, including: creating an appreciation day for the Coral Springs police and fire departments and the North Broward Medical Center; interviewing a local journalist and the Miami Heat DJ who encourages safe teen driving; staging a dramatization of an auto crash and what it would be like to be handcuffed and arrested; hosting a demonstration highlighting the importance of safety belt use; and holding a “Ghost Out” where students pledged to be safe drivers.

“It took a great amount of time and hard work to make it this far and there are no words that can express the excitement we are feeling to be one of the top teams,” said Coral Springs team captain Dahlia Hassanein. “Our team plans to use the award funds to develop more activities that focus on empowering our peers to make positive choices and to give back to the community that supported us on our journey.”

Of the top 20 Act Out Loud finalists chosen to compete in the contest, seven teams were SADD chapters. In addition to Anoka and Coral Springs, the five other SADD chapters were Cactus Shadows High School SADD from Scottsdale, Arizona; Community Alliance for a Safer Tomorrow Youth/Upper Merion Area High School SADD from King of Prussia, Pennsylvania; Henry Sibley High School SADD from Mendota Heights, Minnesota; Hillsboro SADD from Hillsboro, North Dakota; and Madison Central High School SADD from Madison, Mississippi.

The 20 finalists received \$1,000 to implement their traffic safety project and a Flip video camera to record their efforts.

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.

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