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Bellingham High School Group Receives National Accolade

*Massachusetts SADD Chapter Honored for Promoting Safe
and Healthy Decision-Making Among Teens*

Marlborough, Mass. – The Bellingham High School SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) chapter in Bellingham, Massachusetts, has been chosen to receive the 2008 SADD National Activity of the Year award for its efforts to encourage seat belt use in the community. With the help of the school administration and local firefighters, the SADD students incorporated their seat belt initiative as part of the high school’s parking permit requirements.

“This project has gotten students to really think about the importance of wearing a seat belt and has had a positive impact on the community,” said Melissa Newman, the SADD advisor. “Increasing the number of drivers and passengers throughout the community who wear their seat belts was our goal.”

Bellingham SADD made seat belt use by 100 percent of its students a priority during this school year. To encourage their peers to abide by state law, the SADD chapter created a form for students to sign during the school’s parking permit application process. In addition to having students sign a commitment to use their seat belt, SADD members and advisors conducted random seat belt use checks. They established a reward system, with the grand-prize winner receiving a free limo ride to and from prom. Consequences for student drivers or passengers caught not wearing seat belts ranged from watching a video about seat belt use to indefinite suspension of their parking permits. To raise funds for the prizes, SADD students created a calendar with photographs of local firefighters. The firefighters posed with their equipment and with pictures of real fires.

“The creativity and dedication of these SADD students is truly inspiring,” said SADD President and Executive Director Penny Wells. “Through policy change using positive incentives and tapping the offices of local public servants, these students came up with a winning formula for safety. They deserve to be recognized for their tireless efforts promoting SADD’s message and empowering their friends to make safe, healthy decisions.”

The chapter will be formally honored at an awards banquet at the SADD National Conference in Phoenix, Arizona, this June. The chapter will receive a \$500 cash prize, and SADD will cover the cost for one youth and one adult chaperone to attend the conference.

For more than 25 years, SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) has been committed to empowering young people to lead education and prevention initiatives in their schools and communities. Founded as Students Against Driving Drunk in 1981, SADD has become the nation’s preeminent peer-to-peer youth education, prevention, and activism organization, with nearly 10,000 chapters in middle schools, high schools, and colleges nationwide. SADD now highlights prevention of many destructive behaviors that are harmful to young people, including underage drinking, substance abuse, risky and impaired driving, and teen violence and suicide. For more information about SADD, visit sadd.org.

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