



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 21, 2009

CONTACT: Stacey Hart
877-SADD-INC (toll-free)
shart@sadd.org

SADD ANNOUNCES 2009-2010 NATIONAL STUDENT OF THE YEAR

*Students Against Destructive Decisions Chooses Ohio
Teenager to Represent Organization Nationally*

Marlborough, Mass. – SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions), the national school-based, peer-to-peer prevention education organization, today announced that Richard Birt of New Carlisle, Ohio, has been named 2009-2010 SADD National Student of the Year. Birt will be the national student spokesperson for the organization, which has more than 10,000 chapters and hundreds of thousands of active participants in schools nationwide.

“I’m excited about the chance to make a difference and influence teens across the nation to make better life choices,” Birt said. “I believe in SADD’s mission, and I hope to accomplish as much as possible within the next year.”

A senior at Northwestern High School, Birt has been a dedicated SADD student for the last four years and has been very involved with the organization on the local, state, and national levels. He currently serves as a member of the 2008-2009 SADD National Student Leadership Council.

“Ricky has been an exceptional spokesperson for SADD, working tirelessly to ensure that teens are fully aware of the perils of underage drinking and other drug use,” said Penny Wells, president and executive director of SADD. “Being chosen SADD National Student of the Year is a great honor and a natural progression for him. We are confident he will thrive as a leader, an educator, and an important voice and advocate for teens nationwide.”

- more -

Student of the Year responsibilities include publicly addressing issues affecting teens, serving a one-year term on the SADD National Board of Directors, and leading 11 extraordinary youth leaders who comprise the SADD National Student Leadership Council (SLC). The SLC advises the SADD National Board of Directors on policies and programs, plans and implements the SADD annual national conference, and serves as a national and regional student representation network. Birt will begin his term as the SADD National Student of the Year during SADD's annual conference in Washington, D.C., in July. An event will be held in Ohio this spring to introduce Birt as the new SADD National Student of the Year. Details of the event will be announced at a later date.

Birt is the president of his SADD chapter and has helped make it one of the most active organizations in his school. He coordinated two Prevention Conventions that were hosted by his SADD chapter and invited schools from across the state to participate. Birt wrote, distributed, and helped score a survey of his peers to determine the needs of students and then organized events to raise awareness about certain issues. Throughout his time with SADD, Birt has assisted with numerous chapter activities, including Red Ribbon Week and Homecoming celebrations, Elementary Tolerance Lessons, Safety Seat Belt Checks, Prom Promise, and Good Neighbor Week. On the state level, Birt organized Lights for Life, a one-day event in December that called on motorists across Ohio to drive with their headlights illuminated to raise awareness about the dangers of reckless driving. He serves as student council president and is an active member of the track team, band, and choir. He is also a member of the National Honor Society.

“Being selected as the SADD National Student of the Year is a great honor, one that is well deserved and brings great pride to our state and local organizations that have worked so hard to educate teens about responsible decision-making,” said Miranda Cromwell, Northwestern High School's SADD advisor.

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, substance abuse, risky and impaired driving, and teen violence and suicide. More information about SADD can be found at **sadd.org**.

###