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University High School Teacher Receives National Accolade

Florida SADD Advisor Honored for Empowering Teens to Make Safe and Healthy Decisions

MARLBOROUGH, Mass. – The SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) Advisor at University High School in Orlando, Florida, has been chosen to receive the 2007 SADD National Advisor of the Year award for her tireless efforts to promote positive teen decision-making. Sherry Viersen, an educator for 31 years, teaches Life Management Skills/Health and has served in a volunteer capacity as the SADD Advisor for the past four years.

“Sherry deserves this special recognition of her strong leadership and her commitment to SADD over the years,” said SADD President and Executive Director Penny Wells. “She has touched the lives of hundreds of students and has helped create a safer, stronger community.”

Under Viersen’s leadership, the chapter has been extremely active, planning SADD activities throughout the year, including Red Ribbon Week, World AIDS Day, and prom season. This past fall, she organized a local event called *Lighting the Way* to mark SADD’s 25th anniversary. Tragedy struck just one week before the event – a student from the school was stabbed and killed by a classmate. During this difficult time, Viersen understood it was important for people in the community to come together – and an opportunity for the SADD students to raise awareness about youth violence. She worked with students to create a video memorial in honor of the student, and students lit candles at the ceremony to signify their oath to make good decisions.

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“The reason I enjoy being a SADD advisor is it enhances the quality of life for *all* students,” Viersen said. “The message of SADD is life should be a positive adventure that only a clear mind can experience.”

Principal David Christiansen added, “University High School seeks to provide our students ‘A Place of Higher Learning’ and Sherry is a wonderful example of that motto and a true role model for our parents, teachers, students, and administration.”

Viersen was recently named the 2007-2008 FLORIDA SADD Advisor of the Year. Now as the National Advisor of the Year, Viersen will receive a \$500 cash prize and a free trip to the SADD National Conference in New Orleans, Louisiana, this July, where she will be formally honored at an awards banquet.

“Sherry is the type of SADD advisor I wish I had in every school,” said Verl Todd, FLORIDA SADD State Coordinator. “I can’t think of a better person to receive this honor. Her passion and dedication to SADD is truly extraordinary.”

Founded as Students Against Driving Drunk in 1981 in Wayland, Massachusetts, SADD has grown to become the nation’s premier peer-to-peer youth education and prevention organization, with more than 10,000 chapters in middle schools, high schools, and colleges. In 1997, in response to requests from SADD students themselves, SADD expanded its mission and now sponsors chapters called Students Against Destructive Decisions. SADD continues to endorse a firm "No Use" message related to use of alcohol and other drugs. SADD now highlights prevention of destructive behaviors and attitudes that are harmful to young people, including SADD’s key issues of underage drinking, other drug use, impaired driving, and teen violence and suicide. More information about SADD is available at www.sadd.org.

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