



“D.O.N.T. – DRIVE ONLY NEVER TEXT” –

TEACHING TEENS THE DANGERS OF DISTRACTED DRIVING

October 20, 2010

Windsor, Ontario – Some Windsor teenagers will get a close up look at how driving and texting can personally impact them this Friday.

Between 30 - 40 students from Herman high school will attend a “D.O.N.T.” (Drive Only Never Text) seminar at 9 a.m. on Friday October 22, 2010 at the Children’s Safety Village at 7911 Forest Glade Drive.

Students from Walkerville will perform a dramatic presentation.

The students are divided into groups when they arrive, each group taking a turn going through the three education centers.

First is a classroom setting: students are shown safety videos and videos of people talking about how the accidents resulting from texting-and-driving have impacted their lives – losing loved ones, the serious injuries that result, as well as the emotional scars that linger.

Second is an outside setting: each student is given a hand-held device very much like a cell phone. The students are then tasked with driving small go-cart vehicles around the Safety Village while sending text messages on the device. Very soon they learn just how distracting it is to text-and-drive.

Third has students donning “beer goggles”: blurry, sight-diminishing goggles that simulate extreme intoxication. Students are asked to walk a straight line while wearing these goggles, and then are asked to imagine driving a vehicle with such impaired vision.

Finally, Walkerville students perform a series of skits depicting scenarios in which they experience peer pressure to drink alcohol and situations where they feel they must text-and-drive.

MEDIA EVENT:

Where: Children’s Safety Village, 7911 Forest Glade Drive

When: Friday, October 22 at 9 a.m.

Who: Windsor-Essex County Injury Prevention Coalition (WECIPC) and Southland Insurance

On the Web: Oprah.com/packages/no-phone-zone.html

Contact: Ryan Richardson at 519-945-4943 ext. 4486 or at rrichardson@southlandonline.com.

This day of hands-on education is organized and facilitated by WECIPC, and sponsored by Southland Insurance. It's very effective in making the perils of distracted driving real to new drivers.

Southland Insurance president Stephen Savage said that texting and driving is a risk many people may not yet realize. "Not only could this impact your rates, it could end up killing someone."

Savage said that Southland values its partnership with the Windsor-Essex County Injury Prevention Coalition (WECIPC) to bring its "D.O.N.T. – Drive Only Never Text" initiative to Essex County teens to raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving.

"We're pleased to be a sponsor of this important program," explained Stephen Savage. "Instilling good habits in teenagers before they become drivers starts them off on the right foot for when they get their licence. It's about encouraging youth to develop solid driving skills. We're glad to be a part of the initiative."

"Distracted driving is a very real health risk in our community, comparable to impaired driving or secondhand smoke," continued Stephen Savage. "Like those hazards, distracted driving can be prevented through education."

How pervasive is this problem?

In the first quarter of 2010, when Ontario police began ticketing motorists for talking on their cell phones or texting while driving, Toronto police, alone, nabbed 4,397 motorists.

Car & Driver Magazine conducted a test earlier this year to show how long it takes a motorist to hit the brake in a moving vehicle when sober, when legally drunk at .08, when reading an e-mail, and when sending a text.

The results:

- *Unimpaired*: .54 seconds to brake
- *Legally drunk*: add 4 feet
- *Reading e-mail*: add 36 feet
- *Sending a text*: add 70 feet

For more information, please contact Ryan Richardson, Advertising and Promotion Coordinator for Southland Insurance Brokers Inc., at 519-945-4943 extension 4486 or rrichardson@southlandonline.com.