

DEPARTMENT OF MOTOR VEHICLES

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Contact:

Ernie Bertothy

860-263-5024

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(Local angles for Woodbury, Middletown, Rocky Hill
New Fairfield)

DMV, Travelers Announce High School Video Contest Theme

Teen Drivers: Put Your Brakes on Distractions!

WETHERSFIELD - Teen Drivers: Put Your Brakes on Distractions!

The Department of Motor Vehicles and Travelers announced today that this theme would anchor their 2013 Teen Safe Driving Video contest open to high school students statewide. Five student advisors selected this theme because of the immediate dangers distracted driving can pose to young and inexperienced drivers.

"The theme, 'Teen Drivers: Put Your Brakes on Distractions!' is important because teens do not often comprehend the consequences of distracted driving. This theme will hopefully make teens realize that in order to be safe, they must eliminate distractions while driving," said student advisor Stephanie Lewis of Woodbury.

The 25-second videos also must illustrate two or more of the state's teen driving laws. The deadline for submitting a video is January 15, 2014. The contest is open to all high-school age students. Information and rules can be found at www.ct.gov/teendriving/contest.

Attorney General George Jepsen has endorsed the contest as an innovative approach to foster safety awareness among teens.

"The video contest draws on the talents and imagination of high school students to drive home an important message to teen drivers about taking personal responsibility behind the wheel," Attorney General Jepsen said.

"Past contest winners have produced entertaining, informative and dramatic videos about the dangers of distracted driving. I encourage all interested students to participate and look forward to judging this year's entries," he said.

Melody A. Currey, DMV Commissioner, said, "This is a very important theme for the contest. Teen drivers need to be reminded that they must be focused on their actions behind the wheel. Any distractions -- large or small -- can cause a moment of inattention and serious consequences including crashes, injuries and deaths."

Travelers, the contest's co-sponsor, awards \$15,000 in cash prizes to the high schools of winning students and hosts the contest's award ceremony at its Claim U facility in Windsor, CT. Winning videos in past years can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/teensafedriving12>

"This year's contest is designed to send a message to Connecticut teens regarding the dangers of distracted driving," said Henry Edinger, Chief Customer Officer for Travelers. "Through the collective efforts of the contest's teen advisory panel, the contest partners and the DMV, our goal is to help teens understand both the importance of avoiding driving distractions and of developing safe habits behind the wheel early on in their driving experience."

John Emra, State President of AT&T Connecticut, a contest partner, said, "Nothing is more important to us than the safety of our customers and all wireless consumers. AT&T Connecticut is proud to partner with the State of the Connecticut in educating the public about the dangers of distracted driving."

Students working on the project are Allie Caselli and Stephanie Lewis, both of Woodbury, and Hannah McCollam, of New Fairfield, all of whom attend Nonnewaug High School, as well as Katie Cimini of Rocky Hill, and Ama Appiah of Middletown, both attending Mercy High School. They also are members of DMV's Commissioner's Advisory Committee on Teen Safe Driving. (See below comments from students).

The five students volunteered to help make the contest, which has run annually since 2009, appealing to teens across the state. The student-designed theme and use of social media by the teens are features in the contest that the student advisors want to use to encourage entries. The student advisors suggested that the contest for the first time award individual prizes to students to encourage participation. Students on the first-place winning team will receive iPads.

Other promotional contest partners include the Connecticut Police Chiefs Association; the Connecticut State Police; Mourning Parents Act (!MPACT), (a bereaved parents group); the Connecticut Children's Medical Center; Yale-New Haven Children's Hospital; Saint Francis Hospital and Medical Center; The Connecticut Emergency Nurses Association, the state Department of Public Health; The state Department of Insurance, the state Department of Transportation; and the state Division of Criminal Justice.

Last year more than 450 students participated in creating videos. The advisors said this theme delivers a simple message and challenges other teens to craft a message that can influence others to drive more safely.

A panel of judges comprised of Governor Malloy, Attorney General Jepsen, safety advocates, public health professionals and state officials select the winners. High schools are required to use the winning funds to create teen safe driving programs.

In addition to Lewis, the other students offered these comments about selecting the theme this year:

"We are hoping to raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving and hopefully reduce the number of distracted drivers across the state," said Ama Appiah of Mercy High School.

"Our theme for this year's contest, 'Teen Drivers: Put Your Brakes on Distractions!' is important in many ways, both to myself and to the many other teen drivers on the roads today. I feel that this theme is important because teens need to understand the dangers of driving distracted, and that one text or that last bit of makeup isn't worth anybody's life," said Hannah McCollam of Nonnewaug High School.

"This theme is important because as a teen driver myself, I've experienced how dangerous distractions can be. It is critical for teens to drive undistracted to keep themselves and others safe," said Katie Cimini of Mercy High School.

"The theme 'Teen Drivers: Put Your Brakes on Distractions!' is important to me because as a teen just starting to drive I think it's important to spread the education of driving undistracted to help make the roads safer," said Allie Caselli of Nonnewaug High School.