

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Teens in the Driver Seat® Unites Teens to Save Lives

[San Marcos, Texas] – Teens across Texas and Georgia united for a weekend of learning and entertainment as the Youth Transportation Safety Program hosted their Teens in the Driver Seat® (TDS) Summit in San Marcos, Texas.

The Summit featured expert presenters and safety advocates with breakout sessions and interactive activities targeted at convincing teen drivers and passengers that they have the power to change risky driving behaviors—in effect, to save their own lives and the lives of others on the road.

Public and private support from the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), Union Pacific Railroad, State Farm, General Motors and others made for a lively event. Teen Advisory Board (TAB) members kicked off the Summit with a Saturday board meeting then volunteered to present and host interactive exhibits on Sunday during the main event.

“I really enjoy talking to my peers about distracted driving. It isn’t until I show them with a hands-on game or activity that they understand how driving distracted is dangerous,” said TAB Co-Chair, Adrian Garcia. “I tell my peers that driving should be your only task in the car.”

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2017 motor-vehicle crashes were the leading cause of unintentional injury deaths for youth ages 10-24 and have been the leading cause for more than ten years. Last year 219 teens, ages 11 through 18, lost their lives on Texas roads.

The Youth Transportation Safety (YTS) Program at the Texas A&M Transportation Institute set out to change this statistic through positive youth-led prevention that now takes place on junior high, high school, and college campuses around the country. Since 2002, TxDOT has sponsored the TDS program making support and resources free in the state of Texas.

“Teens in the Driver Seat has been a great partner and continues to push the envelope in teen traffic safety education.” said Terry Pence, TxDOT Behavioral Traffic Safety Section Director. “In May, the Texas Transportation Commission approved a goal aiming to end all fatalities on Texas roads by 2050. If we want to reach zero fatal crashes, then we must empower the next generation of traffic safety advocates.”

The event concluded by recognizing the Teens in the Driver Seat All-Star schools for their hard work in spreading the safe driving message year-round. Thanks to sponsors Union Pacific, State Farm and General Motors schools were awarded over \$10,000 through the All-Star reward program in various

states. The money goes to the top TDS teams who may (in turn) use the money towards building an even stronger TDS program and grassroots traffic safety outreach in their community.

Year after year students across the nation commit to participate in this very important cause – to reduce preventable teen car crashes. Thanks to the support of both public and private partners the Youth Transportation Safety Program can unite teens from around the nation to ignite passion and celebrate their success in creating a traffic safety culture on their campus and in their community.

Sources:

- CDC, 10 Leading Causes of Injury Deaths by Age Group Highlighting Unintentional Injury Deaths, United States – 2017 https://www.cdc.gov/injury/images/lc-charts/leading_causes_of_death_by_age_group_unintentional_2017_1100w850h.jpg
- TXDOT Crash Records Information System, Data pulled by TTI November 26, 2019

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About Teens in the Driver Seat®

Teens in the Driver Seat® is an initiative under the Texas A&M Transportation Institute's Youth Transportation Safety (YTS) Program. The YTS mission is to save lives and prevent injury among youth through education, empowerment, and peer-led outreach. The growth of the Teens in the Driver Seat® program, since its inception in Texas, has expanded to over 1.4 million students in more than 1,600 schools. For more information, please visit: www.t-driver.com.