

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
NATIONAL TEEN DRIVER SAFETY WEEK – October 19-25, 2008

Contact:
Patty Carrell, State Coordinator
Healthy Mothers, Healthy Babies-MT Coalition
(406) 465-5829

MSU Students Protected in Crash

Saved by the Belt Award Recognizes Them for Wearing Seat Belts

Helena & Bozeman – A vehicle carrying three Montana State University students was struck by a drunk driver on August 27, but all were spared from serious or fatal injuries. They all wore seat belts and the lifesaving devices protected them.

“I have always said that seat belts save lives and prevent injuries,” says Senator Mike Cooney, a longtime advocate for correct restraint use. “I can now attest to those facts on a more personal level, because seat belts recently protected my son and his friends in a serious crash.”

Colin Cooney, Dash Donelly and Mark Hoyt were traveling on 19th Street, in Bozeman, when their vehicle was struck. The driver of the other vehicle was cited with DUI and operating a motor vehicle without liability insurance. Investigating Officer Greg Lannon, a certified child passenger safety technician who has been formally trained in occupant protection, nominated the students for Saved by the Belt Awards.

“Montana’s Saved by the Belt Program honors and recognizes individuals involved in crashes who were saved because they were wearing seat belts,” says Patty Carrell, State Coordinator for Montana Safe Kids Safe Communities. “By calling attention to real community members who were protected through correct seat belt and child restraint use, we hope to empower others to make the right decisions.”

Motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death and injury in Montana, and nearly 73% of those killed were not buckled up. Over 200 people die on Montana roads, each year, and nearly 10,000 are injured. Approximately 1,300 of the injuries are incapacitating, meaning that those injured can no longer walk, drive or otherwise function as they did before their crashes.

“Make seat belt use an every-time habit. Doing so will help individuals, families and communities avoid the personal pain and expense of serious injury and death related to crashes,” says David Huff, Director of Traffic Education Programs for the Montana Office of Public Instruction. “This event and this week are milestone reminders that young and experienced drivers, and our communities benefit when we all buckle up --- every time.”

National Teen Driver Safety Week - October 19-25, reminds young drivers and their families to commit to safe choices, including the correct use of seat belts and car seats. Montana drivers and passengers are legally required to properly use seat belts, and children must ride in properly used child restraints until they are at least 6-years-old and weigh 60 pounds. The driver of a vehicle is held responsible for the restraint use of all passengers.

“Crashes are violent events and most often occur close to home,” says Joseph M. Colella, a nationally recognized occupant protection instructor and program consultant. “Any of us can be the victims of impaired, aggressive or distracted drivers – or of our own driving errors – and correct restraint use is the most effective way of protecting ourselves.”

For information about the proper use of child seats & seat belts, or to locate a free child seat inspection, visit www.hmhb-mt.org or call 1-800-421-6667. Also visit www.NTDSW2008.org for information about National Teen Driver Safety Week.