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OHS Presents National Safety Award to Local Businessman for Efforts to Reduce Teen Traffic Crashes

Dover – Today, approximately 100 teens who had gathered at a conference geared toward helping them stay safe gave a standing ovation as the Delaware Office of Highway Safety presented businessman Julian “Pete” Booker with a national safety award for his efforts to reduce teen crashes in the First State. Booker was one of five individuals or groups of people selected to receive the Governor’s Highway Safety Association (GHSA) Peter K. O’Roarke Special Achievement Award. The O’Roarke Special Achievement Awards recognize notable achievements in the field of highway safety.

OHS nominated Booker for the O’Roarke Award for his work in the creation and implementation of the Smart Drive program. Smart Drive is an educational program for 11th and 12 grade high school students which focuses on re-enforcing safe driving behaviors and techniques originally learned in driver education.

Booker, the president and CEO of Delmarva Broadcasting Company, came up with the concept for the program in 2004 after several fatal crashes involving teen drivers. One of those crashes hit close to home as one of the victims was a friend of his teenaged son. So Booker brought together a partnership of several safety “experts” including OHS, the Delaware State Police, the Attorney General’s Office AAA Mid-Atlantic, the Delaware Safety Council and driver education teachers to develop a format for a program to remind teen drivers about how to make smart and safe decisions behind the wheel.

The result was a series of monthly modules involving both written and hands on activities that must be completed by both the student and parent. Topics range from impaired driving to driving in rain and snow conditions.

A wide array of prizes and incentives were available to those who participated in and completed the program, including a special concert staged by Delmarva Broadcasting. Other unique features of the program include a student advisory panel formed at each participating school, as well as the creation of the Smart Drive website for schools and students to find additional support and information.

Originally rolled out assembly style in 16 Delaware high schools in 2005, Smart Drive has quickly expanded to 32 high schools statewide in 2006. Smart Drive is primarily privately funded, with Delmarva Broadcasting leveraging most of its resources to keep the program afloat. The Smart Drive safety partners, including OHS, provided not only time but also informational and incentive support to the program. To learn more about the program, visit www.smartdrivede.org.

The O'Roarke Special Achievement Awards were presented at the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) Annual Meeting in Oklahoma City in late September, but because Booker was unable to attend OHS accepted on his behalf and decided to present him with the award at today's YELL (Youth to Eliminate Loss of Life) Annual Conference at the Dover Sheraton.

The GHSA is the states' voice on highway safety. The nonprofit association represents the highway safety offices of states and territories. These offices work to change the behavior of drivers and other road users in order to reduce motor vehicle-related deaths and injuries. Areas of focus include: occupant protection, impaired driving and speed enforcement, as well as motorcycle, pedestrian and bicycle safety, and traffic records. The Association provides a collective voice for the states in working with Congress and the federal agencies to address the nation's highway safety challenges.

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