



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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AAA Minneapolis Brings Hands-On Distracted Driving Course to Jefferson and North High Schools on May 21-22 to Teach Students the Importance of Fastening and Focusing

Students from Both High Schools will be Challenged by the “Skid Monster” Car as they Navigate AAA Minneapolis’ Distracted Driving Course

MINNEAPOLIS, Minn., May 14, 2009 – AAA Minneapolis, one of Minnesota’s leading driver-safety advocacy organizations, will demonstrate the dangers of distracted driving to high school-aged drivers through a hands-on obstacle course on Thursday, May 21 from 9:30 a.m. – 1 p.m. at Jefferson High School located at 4001 W. 102nd Street in Bloomington and on Friday, May 22 from 8:30 a.m. – 2 p.m. at North High School located at 1500 James Avenue North in Minneapolis.

Both Jefferson and North students who are licensed drivers will participate in AAA Minneapolis’ distracted driving demonstration by navigating a car through a challenging course of cones and obstacles. The students will be asked to perform common tasks that unsafe drivers engage in, including texting on their cell phones, fixing their hair, applying makeup or eating. To add another layer to the experience, the car called the “Skid Monster” is outfitted with caster wheels that the instructor can suddenly and unexpectedly unlock, causing a fishtail effect and simulating the scary feeling of driving out of control.

AAA Minneapolis is partnering with Training Wheels Driver Education in Maple Grove. Mark Prudhomme, co-owner of Training Wheels will serve as the driving instructor in the “Skid Monster” while Jefferson and North students drive through the course. Prudhomme at any time will push a button to unlock the caster wheels, causing the student to momentarily lose control. This type of driving exercise helps kids understand the real-life risks associated with distracted driving and hits home the importance of buckling up and solely focusing on the road.

“According to a 2008 AAA Minneapolis survey, 77 percent of drivers ages 18-34 say that they snack while they drive, 70 percent talk on cell phones and one in three drivers admits to text messaging while behind the wheel,” said Jennifer Brownlee, AAA Minneapolis spokesperson.

“The goal of AAA Minneapolis’ distracted driving courses at Jefferson and North this spring is to start combating these statistics and reach students individually.”

In addition to the distracted driving course, crash photos sponsored by Training Wheels Driver Education will be displayed in Jefferson and North’s lobbies along with unique seat belt garments created by three Minnesota teenagers for a recent AAA Minneapolis seat belt fashion show. Both schools are also hosting crash cars in front of their school entrances the week of May 18.

To kick-off all safe driving activities at North only, students will learn how one moment of reckless driving can change a person’s life from a motivational speaker sponsored by Minnesotans for Safe Driving on Thursday, May 21.

The high school distracted driving event is part of a larger 2009 AAA Minneapolis advocacy program called *Fasten & Focus* that targets high school and college students with relevant driving demonstrations, speakers, a dedicated Web site (www.fastenandfocus.org), social media and marketing outreach to promote the importance of seat belt use and safe driving.

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AAA Minneapolis

AAA Minneapolis, based in St. Louis Park, is a full-service automotive, travel, insurance, financial and community services organization, serving nearly 185,000 members in the Hennepin County area. To learn more about AAA Minneapolis, click on www.aaa.com.

Training Wheels Drivers Education

Mark and Debbie Prudhomme founded Training Wheels Driver Education in 1996. Training Wheels has been a front-line leader in novice driver education and was the first driving school in Minnesota to offer a parent component, a nationally acclaimed Victims Impact Panel for Teens, and the Driver Impact Panel Drive Session. Training Wheels has trained more than 40,000 teens. For more information go to www.t-wheels.com.