



## News Release

Contact: Pam Fischer  
Leader, New Jersey Teen Safe Driving Coalition  
(908) 269-5796 (Office)  
(908) 619-2786 (Cell)  
[pamfischerconsulting@gmail.com](mailto:pamfischerconsulting@gmail.com)

### **Statewide Teen Safe Driving Coalition Honors 2016 GDL Champions *Calls on parents to enforce GDL provisions, ensure teens are getting enough sleep during prom and graduation season and year-round***

May 19, 2016 – Teen safe driving advocates from across New Jersey will meet in Monroe Township today to honor a transportation leader, a teacher, a high school, and a community for their efforts to promote the proven principles of Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL), the state’s novice driver licensing program. The 2016 [GDL Champions](#) joined with the [New Jersey Teen Safe Driving Coalition](#), which organized the event, to call on parents to enforce the lifesaving provisions of the state’s GDL law and ensure that their teens are getting sufficient sleep during prom and graduation season and year-round before getting behind the wheel. The luncheon was sponsored by NJM Insurance Group.

Since the GDL program took effective in New Jersey in 2001, the number of motor vehicle-related teen driver and teen passenger (driven by teens) deaths has fallen to record lows. However, last weekend’s early morning, post-prom crash that claimed the lives of two Bridgeton High School students and seriously injured two others, is an important reminder of the high crash risk for teen drivers and the need for teens to comply with the proven provisions of the state’s GDL law. The 17-year-old driver involved in the crash was holding a probationary license which limits the number of passengers to one and prohibits driving between 11 p.m. and 5 a.m.

“Both of these restrictions are critical,” said Pam Fischer, Leader of the New Jersey Teen Safe Driving Coalition, an initiative of The Allstate Foundation and the National Safety Council. “When a teen driver has three passengers in the car, the risk of crashing is nearly four times greater than when that teen is driving alone. Add nighttime driving to the mix, the most dangerous time for all motorists and especially teens, and that risk is exacerbated even more.”

But even more concerning is the potential for drowsy driving, which is likely to occur during late night and early morning hours. “Teens and young adults are involved in more than half of drowsy driving crashes annually in the U.S.,” Fischer pointed out. “Many teens are getting behind the wheel too tired to drive, but they do so anyway because they don’t want to miss out. The last month of school is particularly problematic since teens are busy trying to jam a million things, including prom and graduation activities, into their already busy schedules. It’s critical that parents monitor their teens’ extracurricular activities and make sure they aren’t forgoing sleep in order to do it all.”

The four GDL Champions honored by the Teen Coalition understand the risks for novice drivers and were selected for their efforts to ensure parents and teens leverage New Jersey's GDL program. Tim Chelius, the recently retired executive director of the South Jersey Transportation Planning Organization (SJTPO), the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) serving Atlantic, Cape May, Cumberland, and Salem Counties, is recognized for establishing a traffic safety education and community outreach program, which has made teen driver safety a priority. Since 2010, SJTPO staff members have educated thousands of teens and their parents through school and community-based initiatives resulting in a commendation from the U.S. Department of Transportation as the only MPO in New Jersey and, possibly the nation, doing this type of work.

Also named a 2016 GDL Champion, Genevieve Corrales is a Spanish teacher and supervisor of the SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) Chapter at Sayreville War Memorial High School in Middlesex County. Using SADD, the school's largest club, as a vehicle to promote peer-to-peer behavior change and good decision making behind the wheel, Corrales "talks up" safety throughout the high school and community. Her passion for helping youth become traffic safety leaders extends well beyond Sayreville and New Jersey as she has participated in six SADD National conferences that annually draw thousands of teens from across the U.S.

A collaborative approach to keeping teens and citizens safe has earned the Borough of Kinnelon in northern Morris County recognition as a GDL Champion. From the police department and high school, to elected officials and local businesses, the entire community recognizes the importance of helping teens build skill and become good drivers for life. Numerous educational initiatives are conducted during the school year including a mandatory/parent teen safe driving night, the *Every 15 Minutes* (mock crash) and *GDL Decal Thank You Programs* (positive reinforcement campaign), the *GDL Game Plan for Coaches* (educates coaches, student-athletes, parents, and fans about the risk for teen drivers and the state's GDL law), along with innovative driver education lessons and hands-on activities to help students recognize the dangers of distracted and impaired driving and other unsafe behaviors.

West Morris Central (WMC) High School in Chester (western Morris County) is a GDL Champion because of its decade-long commitment to educating students and their parents about teen safe driving and the state's GDL program. When a teen driver crash claimed the lives of two WMC students in December 2006, the administration instituted a policy requiring students who want to park on campus to attend a teen safe driving orientation with their parents. The program is facilitated by members of the faculty and administration and offered numerous times throughout the school year. It is held up as a state and national model that has prompted other school districts to adopt similar programs and policies.

To help parents understand New Jersey's GDL program, the Coalition developed the *GDL Made Simple* video and a list of *frequently asked questions*, which can be accessed at [www.teensafedriving.org/nj/gdl](http://www.teensafedriving.org/nj/gdl). The [National Safety Council](http://www.nsc.org) developed [DriveitHOME.org](http://DriveitHOME.org) to help parents become effective driving coaches. DriveitHOME.org includes tips, driving lessons and a [New Driver Deal](http://www.nsc.org), which parents and teens can use to develop household driving rules.

# # #

#### **About the New Jersey Teen Safe Driving Coalition**

The New Jersey Teen Safe Driving Coalition seeks to establish a culture of safe teen driving based on the proven principles of Graduated Driver Licensing. Coalition members are volunteers from state and local law enforcement; highway safety, transportation, public health and injury prevention organizations; teens; parents; business leaders; and the family members and friends of teen crash victims. New Jersey's Coalition is one of ten supported by The Allstate Foundation and managed by the National Safety Council. The other states include: California, Florida, Maryland, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Texas.