

The Allstate Foundation Announces National Teen Safe Driving Activists of the Year

by PR-NewsWire

NORTHBROOK, Ill., May 12 /PRNewswire/ -- Natalie Hayford, 16, of Andover, Minn., and Laura Marchetti of Valrico, Fla., have been selected to receive The Allstate Foundation's inaugural Teen Activist of the Year Award and Parent Activist of the Year Award, respectively, for their work to reduce the number one killer of teens -- car crashes. These honors are part of The Allstate Foundation's celebration of National Youth Traffic Safety Month in May.

Hayford and Marchetti rose above a pool of nominated activists from across the country. Hayford received a \$10,000 cash award from The Allstate Foundation that she will put into a college fund, and she selected the Andover High School Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) chapter to receive a \$5,000 grant. Marchetti selected the Katie Marchetti Memorial Foundation to receive a \$10,000 grant from The Allstate Foundation. These grants will allow both Hayford and Marchetti to continue building on their successes in the area of improving youth traffic safety.

"Teen driving is an issue that affects the entire community, not just teens," said Susan Duchak, director of The Allstate Foundation Teen Driving Program. "We are delighted so many teens and parents have taken the initiative in their schools and communities to raise awareness for this important issue. Hayford and Marchetti are two impressive examples we hope others will follow."

Teen Activist Raised Awareness for Reckless Driving among Minnesota's Teens

"I take activism very seriously, and it's a big part of my life," Hayford said. "I love helping others and encouraging positive choices in my peers, and I feel very lucky to be rewarded for something I love. The prize is a tribute to the hard working members of my Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) chapter as well, who worked with me on the activities. I hope to continue to convey safe driving habits for years to come."

At the 2007 National Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD) Conference, Hayford learned about Minnesota's high number of teen driving-related deaths. As the president of Anoka High School SADD, she returned from the conference determined to educate her school and community. Among Hayford's efforts to raise awareness for the issue in 2007: Working with famed University of Minnesota coach Tubby Smith to create three public service announcements; co-writing and co-producing a television program featuring experts that gave advice on educating teen drivers; and helping produce an in-school television segment encouraging teens to confront their peers about unsafe driving.

In 2008, Hayford and the Anoka SADD team are planning to star in a DVD about teens and reckless driving that will be shown to health classes in Minnesota.

Parent Activist Encouraged Seat Belt Use among Florida's Teens

"I lost my 16-year-old daughter, Katie, on March 4, 2006, from a preventable death from not wearing her seat belt -- her belted driver survived with barely a scratch," said Marchetti. "My goal is to empower teens to take responsibility, realize they are not invincible, and wear their seat belts every time they get into a vehicle. Fifty-two percent of teen fatalities are from not wearing seat belts in car crashes, the leading cause of death among teens. Katie is one of those statistics and we live with that fact every day."

Marchetti's 2007 efforts included creating the "Cross Your Heart Promise" program, an initiative aimed at getting Florida's teens to promise they will always wear their seatbelts when riding in a motor vehicle; educating the public about the Florida Companion Primary Seat Belt Bill; presenting "A Night of Seat Belt Awareness" at a Tampa Bay Lightning game in partnership with the team's foundation; helping to produce a public service announcement now shown in area movie theaters; and supporting the "Battle of the Belts" competition between 18 high schools in Hillsborough County.

Marchetti's 2008 goals include further promotion of the "Cross Your Heart Promise" campaign and other efforts to encourage teen seat belt usage.

For more information on how parents can support their young drivers, visit <http://www.protectteendrivers.com/>. For more information on teen-led teen driving activism, visit <http://www.keepthedrive.com/> or <http://www.actoutloud.org/>.

About The Allstate Foundation

Established in 1952, The Allstate Foundation is an independent, charitable organization made possible by

subsidiaries of The Allstate Corporation. The Allstate Foundation partners with non-profit organizations on community initiatives that promote "safe and vital communities," "tolerance, inclusion, and diversity" and "economic empowerment." Teen driving and empowering victims of domestic violence have been major initiatives for the Foundation since 2005.

Source: The Allstate Foundation

Copyright © 2008 PR Newswire Association LLC. All rights reserved.

The Allstate Foundation Announces National Teen Safe Driving Activists of the Year by PR-Newswire