



CATAWBA COUNTY

P.O. BOX 669 Newton, North Carolina 28658-0669 (828) 695-5600 **Catawba County Social Services**

CONTACT: Margaret Allen, Catawba County Social Services Public Information Officer, mallen@catawbacountync.gov, 828-695-6583

WINNERS OF DISTRACTED DRIVING VIDEO CONTEST NAMED

HICKORY, N.C. — A team of students at Maiden High School has been selected as the Grand Prize winner in Catawba County's Distracted Driving Video Contest. Members of the winning team are Matt Ellis, Rebecca Gates, John Kirby and Taylor Abshire.

Their prize was a limousine ride and lunch at the Olive Garden restaurant in Hickory. The prizes were donated by Action Limousine and Olive Garden. Dr. Glenn Barger, superintendent of Catawba County Schools, presented the students with certificates recognizing their accomplishment. Jennifer McCracken, health services manager at Catawba County Public Health and a member of the contest committee, was also present. She told the students that the judges were very impressed with the simplicity of the winning video and the fact that it illustrated many different things that could distract a driver.

The winning video, "Distracted Driving 1," may be seen at <http://youtu.be/bjWW-Q2nOWs>. Monica Smith, who teaches a Video Editing class at the school, said she divided the class into groups and assigned them to create videos for the contest.

A team from St. Stephens High School received the Viewers' Choice Award, which was based on the number of votes from the public. The students on the Viewers' Choice winning team are Hannah Higgins, Hanna Jones, Jasmine Gray and Jodi Kerley. They are Theatre Arts students taught by Molly Rice. They will receive a pizza party at their school. Their video, "In the Blink of an Eye," may be seen at <http://youtu.be/d5Y-Lt62uv4>.

The contest was sponsored by the Catawba County Child Fatality Prevention Team, Community Protection Team and Catawba County Youth Council. The contest was open to all high school students in Catawba County. All 13 videos submitted in the contest may be seen on YouTube at <http://www.youtube.com/user/DistractedDriving>



A team of students at Maiden High School were recognized for creating the Grand Prize-winning entry in Catawba County's Distracted Driving Video Contest. The students are part of a Video Editing class taught by Monica Smith. From left to right are John Kirby; Taylor Abshire; Rebecca Gates; Monica Smith, teacher; Matt Ellis; Dr. Glenn Barger, superintendent of Catawba County Schools; and Jennifer McCracken, health services manager at Catawba County Public Health and a member of the contest committee.

The purpose of the contest was to raise awareness of the dangers of common driving distractions, including texting, talking on a cell phone, listening to loud music or driving with too many passengers. Although it is against the law in North Carolina to text while driving, many people do it.

Distracted driving, including the use of a cell phone, is a factor in nearly 80 percent of accidents, according to a study published by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Virginia Tech Transportation Institute.

A September 2010 report by the U.S. Transportation Department said 5,474 people died in 4,898 crashes linked to distracted driving last year, which is down slightly from 5,838 deaths in 5,307 crashes in 2008. Of those in 2009, about 1,000 involved cell phones. Distracted drivers were a factor in 16 percent of crashes and deaths in both years.

The sponsors of the Distracted Driving Video Contest hope to make it an annual event. Additional information is available on Facebook at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/Distracted-Driving-Video-Contest>.