

# **'X the Text': National Tour Comes to Columbia Area School**

## **MEDIA ADVISORY**

Car crashes are the No. 1 killer of American teens, with nearly 5,000 teens killed annually – and the holiday season is one of the deadliest times for teen drivers. The primary cause of fatal teen crashes is driver error (77 percent) and distractions.

To help save teen lives, Allstate Insurance, with the help of the South Carolina National Safety Council, The Reconnection Communities Coalition, and Richland 2 School District, are encouraging teens and parents to 'X the Text' this holiday season by pledging not to text and drive. Hundreds of Columbia, SC area teens and parents will make a public pledge by stamping their thumb print on a banner that is traveling the country on a 30 city tour.

*Texting is one of the most dangerous distractions facing teens today. According to a recent Allstate Foundation study, 82% of driving teens claim to use cell phones while driving, and 49% admit to being extremely distracted by texting and instant messaging while driving. Recent research conducted by Virginia Tech's Transportation Institute reveals that texting while driving can increase the risk of an accident by 23 times.* Senator Joel Lourie states, "Today's new drivers have to contend with dangerous issues while driving, such as cell phone calls and text messaging, whereas in earlier years these were not the prevalent problems they are now. The Allstate Foundation is a great partner because they are just as passionate about the cause of safe teen driving as I am. It's wonderful to be able to partner with an organization that is working toward the same very important goal - to reduce the number of teen fatalities due to car crashes."

The study also shows parents can have a profound effect on their teen's driving behavior. 81% of teens admit their parents have the most influence on how they drive, and 79% say they are most likely to take driving safety advice from their parents.

- WHO:** Interviews with:
- Attending teens and their parents
  - Blythewood High School teachers and principal
  - Agency Spokesperson TBD
  - Brooke Russell, Executive Director, South Carolina National Safety Council
  - Shane Robinson, Allstate Insurance
- WHAT:** A pledge banner featuring thumb prints from teens and parents across the country. Students from Blythewood and Richland high schools and their parents will join thousands this season, pledging to 'X the Text: Thumbs Up to the Safest Holiday Ever'. For a complete list of tour cities, tour schedule, and to download the family pledge, please visit [www.facebook.com/thumbsuppledge](http://www.facebook.com/thumbsuppledge).
- VISUALS:** Local teens and parents will personally pledge to 'X the Text' this season by adding their thumb prints to a pledge banner making its way across the country.
- WHEN:** **December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2009 beginning at 6:30 p.m. (prior to the varsity boys basketball game vs. Richland High)**
- WHERE:** **Blythewood High School  
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Blythewood SC 29016**
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