



PRESS CONFERENCE:

Berkeley High School 'Alive at 25' Defensive Driving Course sponsored by State Farm®

When: 10 a.m., December 1, 2010

Where: Berkeley High School, 406 West Main Street, Moncks Corner SC 29461

Contact: Brooke Russell, Executive Director/C.O.O South Carolina National Safety Council

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What Can We Do to Help Our Teen Drivers?

Berkeley County Sheriff's Office, Berkeley High School, State Farm® Insurance, and the South Carolina National Safety Council have teamed up to provide the Alive at 25 Defensive Driving Program to young adults in Berkeley County in hopes of reducing teen fatalities within Berkeley County.

State Farm Insurance will be sponsoring 150 students from Berkeley High School to participate in the Alive at 25 program on December 11, 2010 in honor of D.J. Weathers. "Berkeley High School has felt the devastation of losing students over the past few years and we believe that education is power. If we can provide these amazing young people with the tools to make informed decisions behind the wheel of a vehicle we will have given them the chance at living a productive life", said Bruce White, State Farm Insurance Public Affairs Specialist.

Statistically, the odds are stacked against this age group and this program gives them a fighting chance. "The Berkeley County Sheriff's Office pledges to do everything in its power to stop these needless untimely deaths. I am proud to partner with the Berkeley High School, State Farm, and the South Carolina National Safety Council to provide Alive at 25 in our schools," said Sheriff DeWitt. "Knowing the dangers of distracted driving will hopefully allow young drivers to make good decisions and keep our roadways safer." DeWitt believes that the Alive at 25 program has been a positive addition to many communities throughout South Carolina and is excited to bring it to Berkeley County.

The focus is to help educate young drivers to adopt safer driving practices, take responsibility for their behavior in various driving situations, and to be aware of many of the typical driving hazards. The numbers are staggering: nearly 11,000 young adults between the ages of 15-24 die and approximately 300,000 more are injured in automobile crashes annually.

"We join parents in a desire to prepare our children to face the challenges of life; a tragic crash affects everyone within a community. Family, friends, and the school staff are all dramatically impacted by such an event and it is our goal to reduce and hopefully prevent such tragedies from occurring" said Principal McLaren, Berkeley High School. McLaren continued by saying that not all teens will cave to peer pressure or treat driving as merely a social activity. But programs such as this one can ensure that more teens will understand both the technical skills of driving and the responsibility that goes along with the privilege.

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Since Alive at 25 started in South Carolina in 2007, over 32,000 young people have completed the lifesaving course. "Alive at 25 is the tool, but it's the dedicated parents, administrators, community leaders, and law enforcement that are making the real difference," said Brooke Russell, Executive Director/COO of the South Carolina Chapter of the National Safety Council.

Among those graduates, 97% said they would change their behavior behind the wheel. Russell stated that this success would not be possible without the support organizations such as Berkeley County Sheriff's Office, Berkeley High School and State Farm Insurance. "These three organizations are great partners of SCNSC because they are just as passionate about the cause of safe teen driving as we are. It's wonderful to be able to partner with agency's that are working toward the same very important goal - to reduce the number of teen fatalities due to car crashes", said Russell.

Media representatives are urged to cover this event to help increase awareness by young adults and their parents of the importance of safe driving during the Holidays, a period when teen fatalities spike in South Carolina.

About The National Safety Council

The NSC is a non-profit, nongovernmental, international public service organization dedicated to protecting life and promoting health. The NSC is a membership organization, founded in 1913 and chartered by the U.S. Congress in 1953. Members include more than 46,000 businesses, labor organizations, schools, public agencies, private groups and individuals

About State Farm

State Farm insures more cars and homes than any other insurer in the U.S., is the leading insurer of watercraft and is also a leading insurer in Canada. State Farm's 17,000 agents and 68,000 employees serve more than 78 million auto, fire, life and health policies in the United States and Canada, and more than 1.9 million bank accounts. State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Company is the parent of the State Farm family of companies. State Farm is ranked No. 32 on the Fortune 500 list of largest companies. For more information, please visit statefarm.com® or in Canada statefarm.ca®.

About Berkeley County Sheriff's Office

The mission of the Sheriff's Office includes, but is not limited to, the protection of life and property by providing and maintaining a feeling of security and safety among persons within this jurisdiction. Each incident in which this Office becomes involved will be resolved in a fashion that maintains the positive level of confidence, which the community has in the Office.

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