



*SAFE COMMUNITIES PROGRAM OF PICKAWAY COUNTY*

## **PRESS RELEASE**

**DATE: April 1, 2011**

**TO: Circleville Herald**

**FROM: Safe Communities of Pickaway County**

**RE: April is National Distracted Driving Awareness Month**

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Distracted Driving has become a focus of many traffic safety groups, and a topic for discussion among traffic safety advocates. With the increase in the use of cell phones for talking or texting while behind the wheel of a motor vehicle, traffic crashes have also increased as a result of this activity. Because of this concern, April has been designated as "National Distracted Driving Awareness Month". The designation came in 2010 when a resolution was passed by the U.S. House of Representatives. Recent studies concerning the hazards of Distracted Driving has brought about public awareness campaigns through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the National Safety Council, and other non-profit groups. Even private sector companies have made note of the risks, and implemented education and policy for their employees.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, 20% of injury crashes in 2009 involved reports of distracted driving. That same year, statistics show that 5,474 people were killed and 448,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes that reportedly involved distracted driving. The age group with the greatest proportion of distracted drivers was under the age of 20 years.

"These statistics involving younger drivers is the main reason I chose to include 'Teen Driver Safety' as a major component for the Safe Communities of Pickaway County Program", stated Teresa C. Carper, Director for the Program. "Texting and driving has been an issue I have discussed with each of the local high school principals, and is a topic of concern. Studies show you are 23 times more likely to have an accident if you are texting and driving."

But texting and driving is not the only form of distraction that concerns traffic safety advocates. Any activity that takes your eyes off the road, hands off the wheel, or your mind off what you are doing constitutes distracted driving. As an example of how dangerous distractions can be, the University of Utah notes that using a cell phone (hand-held or hands-free), delays a driver's reaction time as much as having a blood alcohol concentration at the legal limit of .08 percent.

"Put down the phone, keep your eyes on the road, and pay attention when you are behind the wheel of a motor vehicle", noted Sheriff Dwight E. Radcliff. "Things can change in a moment's notice, and you can't react if you are not paying attention to the road in front of you."

For more information on distracted driving, and safety information regarding distracted driving, visit the following websites: [www.nhtsa.gov](http://www.nhtsa.gov) , [www.distraction.gov](http://www.distraction.gov) , or [www.FocusDriven.org](http://www.FocusDriven.org) .