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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 6, 2016

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SHERIFF'S OFFICE PARTNERS WITH NEPTUNE HIGH SCHOOL TO KICK OFF DISTRACTED DRIVING MONTH IN AN EFFORT TO KEEP YOUNG DRIVERS SAFE

Neptune Township: Sheriff Shaun Golden wants students who are about to get their driver's license and take to the roadways, to stay safe. In conjunction with April being Distracted Driving Awareness Month, the program, called "*Distracted Driving-Seconds that Could Change or End Your Life*" was conducted by the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office at Neptune High School on Wednesday, April 6.

"We have seen too many crashes on our roadways as a result of distracted driving," said Sheriff Shaun Golden. "Texting and talking on a cell phone while driving is irresponsible. It takes the focus off of the roads and may have deadly consequences that otherwise could be avoided."

The program was presented by Sheriff's Officers Iliana Santos and Michelle Melendez to high school students at Neptune High School. During the one hour presentation, distracted driving was explained along with the types of distracted driving such as texting and talking on cell phones, eating, drinking, reading and grooming, among other activities. In addition, several compelling videos, detailing the aftermath of distracted driving were graphically illustrated. At the conclusion of the presentation, students had the opportunity to ask questions and were left with the advice to share the information they obtained with others.

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“This is a valuable presentation that could very well save the life of a driver and I’m glad our students had the opportunity to witness how dangerous distracted driving can be,” said Principal Richard Allen. “I commend the Monmouth County Sheriff’s Office for its commitment to this serious safety issue. Together we can help decrease distracted driving activities by proactively stressing to teens the safety of driving.”

According to the New Jersey Division of Highway Traffic Safety:

- Driver inattention has been a major contributing factor in nearly 800,000 motor vehicle crashes from 2010 to 2014 in NJ.
- At any given daylight moment across America, approximately 660,000 drivers are using cell phones or manipulating electronic devices while driving, a number that has held steady since 2010.
- 10% of all drivers under the age of 20 involved in fatal crashes were reported as distracted at the time of the crash. This age group has the largest proportion of drivers who were distracted.
- A quarter of teens respond to a text message once or more every time they drive. 20 percent of teens and 10 percent of parents admit that they have extended multi-message text conversations while driving.

While the sheriff’s office program is presented to high school aged students, the information gathered needs to be shared, since driver distraction means that your eyes are off the road, hands are off the wheel and mind is off driving. That could change or end a life.

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In addition to the program and in recognition of the month, a bumper created by students will be on display at various locations in Monmouth County including the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office, called *U Got Brains*, which draws attention to this serious issue of texting and driving.

"It's crucial that students get involved with these projects and programs, and, share the information they learned with their parents, since parents should eliminate distracted driving while operating a vehicle," said Sheriff Golden. "When a parent is in the driver's seat, they lead by example, by the manner in which they drive."

In conclusion to the kick off of Distracted Driving Awareness Month at Neptune High School, a flag was raised by the students who signed it pledging to be safe drivers, not distracted ones.

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