



# KANSAS

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## **Student “Road Crew” helps kick off Click It Or Ticket Miss Kansas 2004 voices support for seat belt enforcement initiative**

MERIDEN, Kan. – Safety is the primary reason for wearing seat belts. Money is another.

Kansas law officers are gearing up for Click It Or Ticket, a two-week enforcement campaign intended to increase seat belt usage and thus save lives and reduce injuries. Officers in Kansas will be aggressively enforcing seat belt laws from May 23 through June 5. Motorists pulled over for any reason and ticketed for another violation who are not wearing their seat belts can expect to get a seat belt ticket too.

Helping kick off the 2005 Click It Or Ticket program in Kansas was a safety-minded student group from Jefferson West High School in Meriden, located just northeast of Topeka. Jeff West students organized the “J-Dub Road Crew” in 2004 after classmates and their family members were killed and injured in several traffic crashes near the school.

On Wednesday the J-Dub Road Crew recognized the Click It Or Ticket effort by inducting several new members in to its ranks, including Kansas Department of Transportation Secretary Deb Miller, Kansas Highway Patrol Supt. William Seck and Megan Bushell, Miss Kansas 2004.

“Wearing seat belts is the number-one action people can take to enhance safety when they travel,” said Savanna Friend, Jefferson West senior and member of the J-Dub Road Crew. “If Click It Or Ticket causes more people to buckle up, then we’re all for it.”

Secretary Miller, whose department organizes and partially funds the annual Click It Or Ticket mobilization, acknowledged that reducing traffic-related deaths and injuries is a top priority. She praised the J-Dub Road Crew for helping bring awareness to seat belt safety.

“Aggressive enforcement periods like Click It Or Ticket must be coupled with heightened awareness if we are to stop the epidemic of traffic-related deaths and injuries in our state,” Miller said. “We commend the students at Jefferson West for helping bring attention to the importance of obeying Kansas seat belt laws.”

J-Dub Road Crew student representative Savanna Friend said during Wednesday’s event that group members were surprised at the high cost traffic crashes extracted from young drivers.

“We know younger drivers are the most likely to be involved in fatality crashes,” Friend said. “Teen drivers accounted for 6.7 percent of all drivers in Kansas last year, but were involved in more than 20 percent of the state’s fatality crashes.

“Fifty-one kids between 15 and 18 were killed in traffic crashes last year in Kansas. Eighty-five percent of them were not wearing seat belts.”

Last year, 456 people died in vehicle crashes in Kansas. An additional 2,000 suffered disabling injuries and some 23,000 suffered less severe injuries. Kansas ranks 43rd among the states in seatbelt use. And, surveys indicate only about half of children age 5-14 wear seat belts. Last year, 76 percent of people killed in traffic crashes in Kansas were unbelted.

The Click It Or Ticket mobilization involves partnering law enforcement agencies throughout Kansas and across the nation. More than 12,000 law enforcement agencies are participating in this year’s mobilization.

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