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## **Ad Council Launches New Campaign to Prevent Youth Reckless Driving**

*UR the Spokesperson campaign empowers teens to 'Speak Up'*

**WASHINGTON, DC** – Car crashes are the number one killer of teens in the U.S. and The Advertising Council wants to put the brakes on this alarming situation. In partnership with a coalition of state Attorneys General and consumer protection agencies, SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) and AAA (American Automobile Association), the organization launched the *UR the Spokesperson* campaign today to save lives by reducing youth reckless driving.

National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) data show that, on average, more than 300,000 teens are injured in car crashes each year, nearly 8,000 are involved in fatal crashes and more than 3,500 are killed. NHTSA research also shows that teen drivers are involved in more than five times as many fatal crashes as adults. Young drivers are more likely to speed, run red lights, make illegal turns, and die in an SUV rollover.

With the message "Speak Up," the *UR the Spokesperson* campaign targets young adults between the ages of 15 and 21 and encourages them to be the spokesperson against reckless driving by empowering them to speak up when they are in the car with friends and don't feel safe. The campaign also seeks to increase awareness about the dangers of reckless driving and educate teens on how to be safe drivers by focusing on safe speeds, avoiding distractions, wearing seat belts, and the differences associated with driving SUVs. AAA will be assisting the Ad Council in these efforts nationwide through its clubs and SADD will be helping to spread the message by reaching out to its 350,000 student members.

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“This is a vital campaign that will empower teens to speak up when they feel their safety is threatened,” said General Thurbert Baker, Attorney General of Georgia. “Too often teens are worried about their reputation and that they won’t be ‘cool’ if they speak up. But they need to because it could be a matter of life and death.”

Research shows that teen drivers may be more likely to listen to their friends than to adults, which is why the *UR the Spokesperson* campaign is using a peer-to-peer approach. When it is a friend who speaks up, a young driver will listen because they don’t want to damage the friendship or be labeled a bad driver.

“We want it to become not only socially acceptable, but socially expected for teens to speak up when they are riding with a friend and don’t feel safe,” said Peggy Conlon, President and CEO of the Ad Council. “We also want to educate them about the dangers and consequences of reckless driving by reminding them to drive safely, wear their seat belts and limit distractions.”

The *UR the Spokesperson* campaign includes a series of public service advertisements (PSAs), a new Web site and a soon-to-be launched contest. Created pro bono by North Castle, a Stamford-based advertising agency that specializes in reaching teens, the PSAs feature a stereotypical, smarmy, over-the-top spokesperson who appears in the car to deliver safe driving tips. The ads conclude with the message “There is no spokesperson to prevent reckless driving. There’s only you. Speak up.” For more information on the campaign and to see the ads, please visit [www.URtheSpokesperson.com](http://www.URtheSpokesperson.com).

### **The Advertising Council**

The Ad Council ([www.adcouncil.org](http://www.adcouncil.org)) is a private, non-profit organization with a rich history of marshalling volunteer talent from the advertising and media industries to deliver critical messages to the American public. Having produced literally thousands of PSA campaigns addressing the most pressing social issues of the day, the Ad Council has effected, and continues to affect, tremendous positive change by raising awareness, inspiring action and saving lives.

### **State Attorneys General and Consumer Protection Agencies**

In 2002, a settlement was reached between the 50 states (and Guam, Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands) and the Ford Motor company that resolved allegations of deceptive trade practices relating to the sale and advertising of Ford sport utility vehicles. The state Attorneys General and consumer protection agencies were responsible for allocating those portions of the settlement moneys which were earmarked for public education campaigns, including \$3 million for a youth-targeted public service advertising campaign.

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