



MINNESOTA

TOWARD ZERO DEATHS

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Toward Zero Deaths announces annual award winners at state conference in Duluth

Collective efforts helped reduce number of traffic deaths, serious injuries in Minnesota

ST. PAUL, Minn. – Ten individuals and organizations were honored with Minnesota Toward Zero Deaths awards at the statewide TZD conference Nov. 16-17 in Duluth for their efforts to reduce the number of traffic deaths and serious injuries in the state.

The awards are given annually to individuals or organizations in Minnesota who show excellence in TZD's emphasis areas of enforcement, emergency medical and trauma services, education, engineering, child passenger safety and judicial/court systems. Recipients have shown leadership and commitment to improving traffic safety throughout the state and building partnerships with others in the field.

Twin Cities Metro area award winners are:

Kathy Swanson Outstanding Service Award

- Sue Porter, Transportation System Management and Operations manager at the Minnesota Department of Transportation, received the Kathy Swanson Outstanding Service Award for showing exceptional leadership in efforts to improve traffic safety in the state, build partnerships and mentor others in the field. Porter has actively promoted traffic safety throughout her career. During her time as MnDOT's state traffic engineer from 2008-2015, she worked to promote and implement TZD efforts within her department and with local, state and national partners. Porter was key in implementing the working group and task force for the 2014-2019 Strategic Highway Safety Plan as the TZD leadership committee co-chair.

Distinguished Public Leadership Award

- Chief Gary Kroells, West Hennepin Public Safety Department, received the Distinguished Public Leadership Award, which recognizes public leaders who, through their vision, leadership and knowledge, have influenced traffic safety policy directions that benefit society. Kroells worked to improve safety



conditions on Highway 12, helping to form the Highway 12 Safety Coalition and serving as its chair. Under his leadership, the coalition worked to install rumble strips and turn lanes at the junction of County Road 92 and a concrete median barrier between County Road 112 and County Road 6.

Emergency Medical and Trauma Services Star Award

- Matt Jakubik, North Memorial Air Care, helped other EMS organizations find their role in the TZD program by presenting at internal conferences and TZD statewide conferences. He gained approval to decal 140 North Memorial ambulances and nine North Memorial helicopters with the TZD logo.

Traffic Safety Innovation Award

- This award recognizes non-governmental organizations for new and creative traffic safety solutions that help save lives on Minnesota roads. This year's recipient is Motorcycle Dial-A-Ride, a non-profit volunteer organization throughout Minnesota that works to educate riders about ways to keep impaired motorcyclists off the road. They emphasize responsible driving to motorcyclists and encourage them to not drink and drive. When no other options are available, they provide a free ride for riders, motorcycles and passengers.

Greater Minnesota award winners are:

Child Passenger Safety Star Award

- Laura Owen, Duluth Fire Department, helped grow the child passenger safety program. She created monthly child safety seat checks and clinics, and instructs CPS classes. She is regarded as a knowledgeable figure in her community who supports traffic safety coalitions and creatively educates parents and their children about these topics.

Engineering Star Award

- Lou Tasa, Minnesota Department of Transportation assistant district engineer and state aid engineer, formed collaborative working relationships with counties in the Bemidji area. By forming the bridge between TZD and county board efforts, their common goals of improving road and safety conditions are placed at the forefront.

Education Star Award

Officer Adam Gau, school resources officer with the Isanti Police Department, formed partnerships to educate communities about the importance of traffic safety. As president of the Minnesota Juvenile Officers Association, he partnered with AAA to develop the Seatbelt Challenge, a competition instilling the effortlessness of buckling up to students in grades 6-12. This was Minnesota's first seatbelt challenge, now used throughout the state.

Judicial/Court System Star Award

- Michelle Zehnder Fischer, Nicollet County Attorney, held an impaired driver

accountable for his actions, which resulted in the death of a co-worker when he crashed his vehicle. The case spanned more than two years, making it all the way to the Minnesota Supreme Court.

Enforcement Star Award

- Deputy Sheriff Tom Coulter, Blue Earth County Sheriff's Office, has served as the Safe & Sober and the Blue Earth County TZD Enforcement grant coordinator since 1999. He leads by example as a road deputy who makes traffic enforcement a priority during his shifts and serves as a school resource officer for the St. Clair School District. He promotes the TZD mission through partnerships within his community through his personal efforts and as part of the Blue Earth Safe Roads Coalition and a member of the South Central Minnesota TZD Steering Committee.

Media Star Award

- Dodge County Independent Newspaper published front page stories and weekly columns on traffic safety and TZD efforts. Their stories ranged from seat belt kick off events to highlighting how fatal and serious injury crashes affect law enforcement, EMS and those close to the people involved. The newspaper's support and coverage has helped spread the TZD message.

The TZD program is an interdisciplinary partnership with the state departments of Health, Transportation and Public Safety. This collaboration began 13 years ago and has worked to reduce roadway fatalities by more than 60 percent.

More than 1,000 traffic safety professionals attended this year's TZD conference.

Learn more about TZD, including a full list of award recipients, at www.minnesotatzd.org.

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