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Hollywood, Government and Youth Mobilize to Counter Recent Teen Crashes New Government National Youth Driving Statistics Released

October 15, 2004 (*Los Angeles, CA / Washington D.C.*) To combat a rash of high profile teen crashes nationwide, the Recording Artists, Actors and Athletes Against Drunk Driving (RADD) Coalition and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), both members of the National Organizations for Youth Safety (NOYS), are promoting a new educational campaign aimed at fostering a dialogue between parents and teens and their peers on the importance of buckling up, not driving impaired and curbing underage drinking.

NHTSA released today national data showing traffic crashes continue to be the leading cause of death for 15-20 year olds. In 2003, 3,657 (3,827 in 2002) drivers 15 to 20 years old were killed, and an additional 308,000 (324,000 in 2002) were injured, in motor vehicle crashes. Nearly 31 percent of teen drivers killed in motor vehicle crashes in 2003 had been drinking and 74 percent of this group was not wearing their safety belts.

Self-reporting by sixth graders indicates that 16 percent say they drink. That number reaches 82 percent by the time they graduate from high school and by the time teens are in the 10th grade - typically the year they begin to drive - 71 percent of them say they drink. (Teens Today™ research conducted by SADD and Liberty Mutual, 2002)

"Although crash statistics are at record low levels, we must work everyday to remind everyone about the deadly mix of inexperienced teen drivers and alcohol," says NHTSA Administrator Jeffrey Runge, M.D. "We know parents hold the keys to prevention and the first step is simply talking to your teen about buckling up, slowing down, and never driving impaired."

The Coalition's initial outreach includes the RADD HBO Family Educational Community Kit featuring a discussion guide and copy of the full length HBO Family documentary *Smashed: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol*, teen audience PSAs featuring RADD celebrity messenger, Chris Pratt and online access to information and solutions for parents, teens, young adults, educators and communities. All materials and statistics can be found at www.radd.org.

"It comes down to one bad decision leading to senseless loss of life," says actor Chris Pratt of The WB's 'Everwood', featured in the RADD Teen PSA program. "I know first hand the repercussions for families and friends, so I am glad to use my ability to reach young people to talk about the issues of underage drinking and safe driving."

"We see the tragic results of alcohol and unbuckled drivers and passengers in our emergency rooms every day," says NHTSA Medical Fellow, Dr. Todd Thoma. "The teens and parents in 'Smashed' represent the horrible aftermath for youth, families and entire communities." Thoma is a featured speaker in the live panel discussion featurette, included in the RADD HBO Family Educational Community Kit.

"RADD formed the public/private coalition to respond to an urgent situation," says Erin Meluso, RADD President. "We have listened to teens and parents and are responding. HBO Family's hard-hitting documentary *Smashed: Toxic Tales of Teens and Alcohol*, is a terrific tool to kick-start this urgent dialogue. Our goal is to further educational outreach and seek solutions for three life-threatening teen issues: under age drinking, excessive speed and under usage of seatbelts."

Coalition partners include; founding chair RADD; the Entertainment Industry's Voice for Road Safety, www.radd.org; with HBO Family, www.hbo.com; National Organizations For Youth Safety (NOYS), www.noys.org; Students Against Destructive Decisions (SADD), www.sadd.org; Family Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), www.fcclainc.org; Bacchus and Gamma Peer Education Network, www.bacchusgamma.org; and Federal RADD Coalition partners: US Department of Transportation (lead), www.nhtsa.dot.gov; SAMAHSA, an agency of the US Department of Health and Human Services; US Department of Education Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools; and US Department of Justice Office of Justice Programs/OJJDP. Underwriting has been generously provided by HBO Family, www.hbo.com; Inspired Corporation, www.inspiredcorp.com; Sonopress, www.sonopress.com; National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) www.nhtsa.dot.gov, and Davis-Glick, www.davisglick.com with additional sponsor support generously provided by Liberty Mutual Insurance, www.libertymutual.com; National Organizations For Youth Safety (NOYS), www.noys.org; and SafeCar Services, www.safecarservices.com.

- **RADD** (Recording Artists, Actors and Athletes Against Drunk Driving), '*The Entertainment Industry's Voice for Road Safety*', is an internationally recognized non-profit organization that empowers celebrities and media partners to create positive attitudes about road safety. Founded in 1986, RADD advocates the use of designated drivers for adults, seatbelts and safe driving through control behind the wheel for all, making responsible behavior the norm. RADD's messages are non-judgmental, hip and positive. Other RADD celebrity messengers include *Aerosmith, Sir Paul McCartney, Shaquille O'Neil, Marc Anthony, Faith Hill, Beyonce Knowles, Justin Timberlake* and more than 500 others, all of whom have lent their image, voice and/or support to RADD over the years to deliver RADD's life saving message. RADD's goal is to reduce fatalities and injuries across all age groups by promoting safe, sober driving and awareness of road safety.
- **Chris Pratt** from **The WB's 'Everwood'**. Returning for its third season, this critically acclaimed engrossing series has proven itself to be much more than the average family drama. Unafraid to tackle any subject, 'Everwood' has confronted such topics as teens with sexually transmitted diseases, medical marijuana, abortion and living with AIDS. 'Bright Abbott' (played by Pratt) killed his best friend in a drunk driving crash. The crash happened before the first season began was seen in flashbacks and the friend (played by Mike Erwin) died in the second season premiere. 'Everwood' airs Mondays (9:00 - 10:00 p.m. ET/PT) on The WB Network.
- **NHTSA** (The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration), under the [U.S. Department of Transportation](http://www.transportation.gov), was established by the Highway Safety Act of 1970, as the successor to the National Highway Safety Bureau, to carry out safety programs under the National Traffic and Motor Vehicle Safety Act of 1966 and the Highway Safety Act of 1966. www.nhtsa.dot.gov
 - **Dr. Jeffrey W. Runge** is Administrator, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, America's lead Federal agency for the prevention and control of motor vehicle death and injury. Dr. Runge, a native of North Carolina, is an accomplished emergency physician, educator and researcher with a lifelong interest in injury prevention beginning with his work as an Emergency Medical Technician during his college years in 1974. He is a nationally recognized expert in motor vehicle crash injury. Prior to joining the Bush Administration, Dr. Runge practiced and taught emergency medicine in one of America's busiest trauma centers. Dr. Runge is a board-certified in Emergency Medicine and holds the title of Clinical Professor of Emergency Medicine, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He served as Assistant Chairman of the Department of Emergency Medicine at Carolinas Medical Center in Charlotte, and Director of the Carolinas Center for Injury Prevention and Control.
 - **Dr. Todd Thoma** is an emergency physician at Louisiana State University in Shreveport, Louisiana. He is also part of the faculty at the College of Medicine, and trains emergency physician residents. He has been an enthusiastic and tireless advocate for traffic safety issues, doing numerous presentations for high school and college students, and has testified before the Louisiana state legislature on many occasions. As NHTSA's Medical Fellow, Dr. Thoma has expanded his activities to include radio and television media, acting as surrogate for NHTSA Administrator, Dr. Jeff Runge. He is also involved in teaching paramedics and EMTs how to predict injury based on car crash kinematics.

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For further information please visit www.radd.org or contact:

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