

## Connecticut teens are saying "enough!"

Teen traffic deaths are on the rise in Connecticut, but students from rival high schools in Bristol are saying "enough." In late November, Connecticut teens announced a pact to join forces and save lives with the help of the Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS) program, which is making a life-saving impact in Texas.



Bristol Eastern and Bristol Central High Schools are the first two schools in the New England area to launch the TDS program and are hoping to gain community support to spread the message to surrounding school districts.

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About 50 teenage drivers in Connecticut are involved in fatal crashes every year. "A lot of my friends have made bad choices. I'm trying to hammer home to them that you can either choose to be safe or you can choose to kill yourself," said a Connecticut TDS teen leader.

Students kicked off the campaign by announcing findings from a local Connecticut study provided by researchers at the Texas Transportation Institute:

- Only 2 percent of teens realize that nighttime driving is risky, even

though that factor ranks at the top of the list of dangers.

- Only 15 percent regard the lack of seat belt use as being a major contributor to crash injuries and deaths.
- 41 percent could name at least three of the top five driving dangers, 25 percent could name four, and only 3 percent could name all five.
- On a positive note, 76 percent recognized speeding as risky, and 95 percent cited alcohol as a risk factor.

"The students are committed to lessening teen crashes and deaths," says TDS Director Russell Henk. "Like high school students in Texas, they have been overwhelmed with the deaths of friends and classmates, and they are looking to TDS for help. We are proud that they turned to us and are happy that these two high schools have come together to make a difference."

"We all know that teenagers listen to each other much more than they listen to adults," said Joseph F. Marie, Connecticut commissioner of transportation. "What better way then to make them safer on the roadways than to have them carry the message of safety and awareness to each other? That's what Teens in the Driver Seat is about."

From all of us at Teens in the Driver Seat, we welcome Bristol Eastern and Bristol Central High Schools, and look forward to seeing many great things from their students.

## Driving the Message Contest—Re-fueled!

Do you or your classmates have a creative drive and want to express it? Don't miss out on this year's Driving the Message Contest—Re-fueled!

Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS) is looking for this school year's greatest public service announcements, videos, posters and program scrapbooks highlighting your school's effort at saving lives. The only requirement is that the entry or entries must address the issue of safe driving by focusing on one or more of the five main driving dangers for young people.

Extra credit will be given if you include information about the dangers of "night time driving" and/or "not buckling up in the backseat" in your entry.

Judging will be based upon originality, creativity and how well you follow the messages that are central to the TDS program. It's that simple. Check out last year's winners; download the contest rules, poster and more at [www.t-driver.com/contest](http://www.t-driver.com/contest).

Do you want  
to win \$1,000?  
Enter the TDS  
Contest!

# Driving the Message Contest

Brought to you by  
State Farm Insurance

re-fueled!



Speak up, save a life, and cash in!

Hey, Texas Teens!

Drive home your best peer-to-peer driving safety message with a **poster, video, or scrapbook.** of your TDS program project

Visit **t-driver.com** for contest details and entry form

**DEADLINE - FEBRUARY 14, 2009**

3 PRIZES  
IN EACH CATEGORY

1<sup>st</sup> - \$1,000

2<sup>nd</sup> - \$500

3<sup>rd</sup> - \$250



Prize funding provided  
by State Farm Insurance





## First TDS Summit Update

The first Teens in the Driver Seat (TDS) Summit was a huge success! On October 24-25, the TDS Summit brought 200 people, representing 34 different cities across Texas, to The University of Texas at San Antonio (UTSA) campus to learn more about this dangerous epidemic. Teens attended from high schools all over the state, along with representatives from community colleges, school districts, state agencies, cities and private companies. Thanks to everyone who was able to join us—whether in person or through the free online webinar.

The event was kicked off by a press conference from U.S. Representative Ciro Rodriguez. He talked about the severity of the teen driver safety problem and how the TDS program is a key part of the solution. Students from several high schools joined Congressman Rodriguez, along with Dr. Maria Teresa Cerqueira from the World Health Organization. The press conference was followed by a guest appearance from Silver Stars basketball player Sophia Young (#33), who signed autographs for all attendees. Other activities included a formal luncheon, several guest speakers, door prizes, teen group discussions, games and a sharing of ideas.

In addition, teens attending the TDS Summit had the chance to read scripts for a public service announcement that is planned to run on TV stations across Texas in the spring. The "Star Tapings" event was a big hit, with more than 30 stars lining up to read on camera, in both English and Spanish.

Special thanks to the students from Communications Arts and MacArthur High Schools in San Antonio, Texas, for capturing video footage for future public service announcements and driving safety pieces for the Teens in the Driver Seat campaign.

Highlights of the TDS Summit are available at [www.t-driver.com/summit](http://www.t-driver.com/summit). Visit the website to view videos from student reporters, pictures, a press release and more.

Finally, begin planning now for the second annual TDS Summit to be held in El Paso, Texas, in the fall of 2009. If you have any comments or recommendations for future summits, please send an email to [Kathy Montemayor](mailto:k-montemayor@tamu.edu) at k-montemayor@tamu.edu.

We look forward to seeing you at the second annual TDS Summit next fall!





# What's going on in your area?



El Paso Mayor John Cook presents an award to Dylan Baird.

## El Paso TDS Reps. Jeff Shelton & Llubia Corella

- On October 20, TDS representatives attended the **Mayor's 100 Teens banquet**. The program director has made TDS one of three mandatory programs the 100 teens (selected from various schools in El Paso) must accomplish.

- On October 8, **Irvin HS** held a Teen Driver Safety Night where area El Paso Independent School District high schools were in attendance including **Parkland HS, Chapin HS, Andres HS** and **Irvin HS**. Officer Slade Davis presented material on the effects of drinking and driving and demonstrated its effects with goggles and a "roll-over" cage provided by the Texas Department of Transportation. Jeff Shelton concluded the event with a presentation on TDS.

- On October 22, over 65 teens attended the first-ever TDS club meeting, developed by **Coronado HS**. The school parked a crashed car in front of the school. Lauren Souers, one of last year's Mayor's 100 Teens, is acting president of the club. Speakers are planned for each month to share experiences related to TDS' risk factors.

- Eastwood HS** displayed a truck with TDS posters during its homecoming parade. This school is deploying TDS with the help of the wrestling team. Ashley Melero is the TDS leader. She is part of the wrestling team and is an inspiration to all. Being blind is not a disability to her. She knows she can help save lives.

- Canutillo HS** has made posters along with chalk outlines stressing the importance of the five major risk factors.

## El Paso continued

- On September 23, a new collaboration began with **Judge Rick Olivo**. Judge Olivo plans to participate in the annual TDS El Paso summit next year. Judge Olivo brings a new perspective to the TDS program, giving insight into the consequences of teenage traffic tickets, car accidents and fatalities.

## Dallas/Fort Worth/Tyler TDS Rep. Christie Madsen

- On September 29, **Lindale HS** hosted a leadership meeting for the surrounding FCCLA schools. Christie Madsen was invited to speak about the TDS program.

- Creekview HS** students created 8-foot distraction boards for the hallways of their high school in order to help their peers learn about the top distractions teens face behind the wheel. The TDS group also handed out "Don't Drive and Text" stress phones to the crowds at a local football game, courtesy of their local State Farm agent.

- Everman HS** sponsor Lisa Hollinger found a costume at a garage sale that fit the TDS theme. It was a crash test dummy. The students have begun to integrate this new tool in the form of a mascot for their TDS program.

- Thanks to **Azle HS** and **Creekview HS** students for their participation in focus groups to help keep the TDS program updated with the teen perspective.

- Creekview HS** participated in a "distraction relay" by making cars out of boxes and rolling chairs. One hand had to be on the steering wheel at all times while they juggled distractions—like eating, texting, or finding a song on the iPod. This reinforced the dangers of distracted driving.

## Austin/San Angelo TDS Reps. Casey Dusza & Tina Geiselbrecht

- Brady HS** is making posters and a calendar. The fashion merchandising class is working on T-shirts that say "seatbelts are stylish."

- Bronte HS** students made posters for Safety Week and Red Ribbon Week. During Red Ribbon Week, they had guest speakers on teen driving safety and drug and alcohol safety. On Halloween, they simulated people dying from car accidents and had them sit in a pep rally to show the number of student lives that could be affected. For two weeks, they read driving statistics and facts during announcements. Their multimedia class is making two videos. One video is for elementary students about watching for drivers when riding a bike. The second video is for driving during prom and how distractions cause wrecks—covering all five top risks.

- Sterling City HS** has made October "Driving Safety" month. The students made announcements with driving facts every other day and put flyers on lockers with the TDS promotional items. They also drew body outlines on the sidewalk.

- Albany HS** made a display window in the main hallway of the high school to highlight the dangers of driving at night to coincide with Halloween. The students plan to highlight each risk individually.



Coronado HS used a wrecked car to advertise its first TDS club meeting.



Creekview HS made huge models of distractions to remind fellow classmates about the dangers of distracted driving.



Creekview HS TDS team members pose in front of their banners.

# What's going on in your area? Continued

## Houston

TDS Rep. Lori Gray

- The TDS program is growing in the Houston region with eight schools added: **Nacogdoches HS, Robert E. Lee HS** (Baytown), **Stafford HS, East Early College HS** (Houston), **Reagan HS** (Houston), **International HS at Sharpstown** (Houston), **Pasadena Memorial HS** and **Chireno HS**.
- On October 29, Lori Gray met with **Nederland HS, Needville HS, West Brook HS** and **Jasper HS** at an FCCLA cluster meeting.
- On October 30, **Channelview HS** participated in the homecoming parade with a TDS float.
- A student in the TDS program from **West Sabine HS** presented the TDS program to **Central HS, Henderson HS, Woden HS, Zavalla HS, Chireno HS** and **Martinsville HS**.
- Robert E. Lee HS** in Baytown, Texas, has started TDS with its FCCLA group. Visit their website at <http://www.fcclarel.ning.com> to view their latest activities.



Stafford HS students swap ideas with teens at the TDS Summit.

## Lubbock/Amarillo/ San Antonio/Laredo

TDS Reps. Krizia Martinez,  
Kathy Montemayor & Russell Henk

- On September 24, Tim Lai and Krizia Martinez gave presentations on TDS and set up the TDS exhibit booth at the **Student Council Conference** at the Blossom Athletic Center in San Antonio.
- On October 18, Krizia Martinez, Jacki Lackey and Tim Lai participated in the **Love UR Life Conference** at the East Side Boys and Girls Club in San Antonio.
- Krizia Martinez met with **Taft HS, Hondo HS, O'Connor HS** and **Holmes HS** in the San Antonio area to introduce the TDS program.
- In Corpus Christi, **Banquette HS** is planning to work with **Agua Dulce HS** on a spring break media event with the cooperation of Cliff Bost, public information officer for the Texas Department of Transportation.
- On November 24, Laredo Mayor Raul G. Salinas will announce "Teens in the Driver Seat Safety Week." Thanks to **Vidal Trevino HS** for making this possible.
- On November 15, **Hondo HS** participated in a community service event by passing out TDS promotional items. The students are also planning a school-wide assembly and will perform skits about the top five risks.
- At **Palmview HS** the students are hanging two TDS banners in front of their new school to promote the program.

## BCS/Yoakum, Waco

TDS Reps. Bernie Fette & Jen Ross

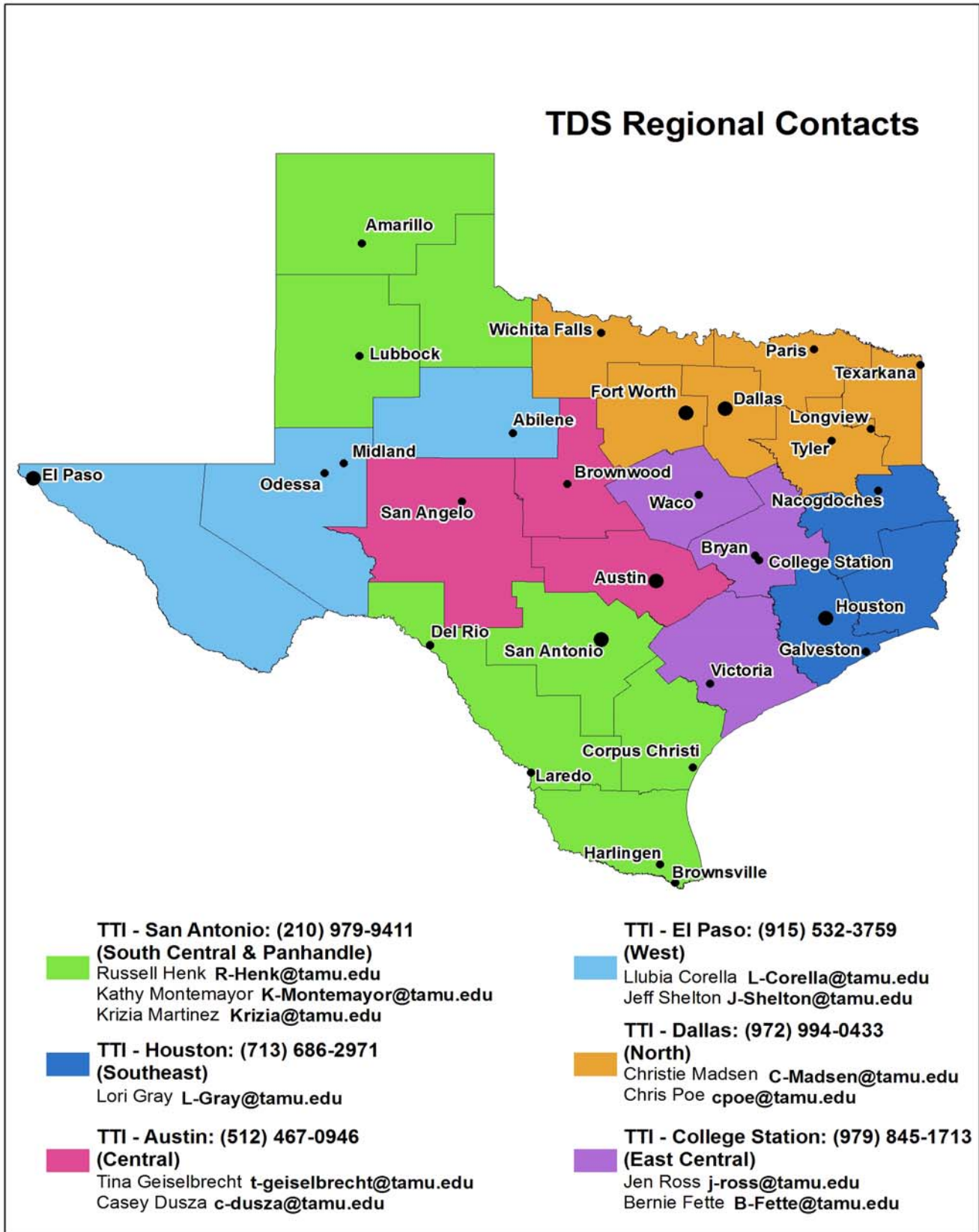
- West HS** passed out promotional items and made posters with TDS messages during Red Ribbon Week.
- Connally HS** is starting up its TDS program as a second-year school for the 2008-2009 school year.
- Gatesville HS** is starting up its TDS program as a second-year school for the 2008-2009 school year.
- Jen Ross visited with **St. Michael's Academy, Bryan HS, St. Joseph Catholic School, Brazos Christian School, Hammond-Oliver HS for Human Sciences** and **Harmony Science School** during the week of November 10-14 about the TDS program.

## OUT OF STATE

- In Bristol, Connecticut, two rival high schools, **Bristol Eastern HS** and **Bristol Central HS**, have successfully deployed the TDS project together. Both schools are excited about the results of their assessments and are planning several TDS projects. They have attracted the attention of the media and political officials.
- Plans are moving forward to begin more work in Georgia. TDS will be working with the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety.



**Robert E. Lee HS** in Baytown, Texas start off the school year creating their own banners for TDS.



*Do you know teens who want to start TDS? Do you have an update to share? Does your TDS group need assistance? If so, find your location on the map and contact your regional coordinator. For out-of-Texas contacts, please contact [Russell Henk](mailto:Russell Henk) or [Bernie Fette](mailto:Bernie Fette).*



## Teacher Highlight



Suzanne "Mama" Reese from Creekview High School in Carrollton, Texas, is a highlighted TDS sponsor.

TDS is a peer-to-peer program, but each teen group has at least one strong support for their program—their adult school sponsors. Suzanne Reese is one of these remarkable TDS sponsors.

Mrs. Reese, for the second year, is leading the outstanding group at Creekview High School in Carrollton, Texas. In addition to her full class schedule, she also teaches a leadership class and sponsors the TDS group. Mrs. Reese holds her students to the highest standards in all areas of leadership, and this skill has earned her the school-wide nickname of "Mama Reese." During her tenure, her team has produced many brag-worthy ideas. Her students designed a 4-foot-long taco and an equally large make up compact case with matching application brush. These and other items were hung in the main hallway of the school with a sign that read "Distractions Kill." Mrs. Reese's 2007-2008 TDS team spread the TDS message in a unique and touching way. At prom, they invited several of the students from the Special Education Department to stand at the exit doors after prom and hand out TDS air fresheners and key chains to each student. As they received the item, the special guests told them, "Please drive home safely so we can see you at school on Monday."

Mrs. Reese also finds ways to creatively raise funds for her student projects. With State Farm being a state-wide sponsor of the TDS program, she contacted a local State Farm agent and asked for sponsorship of her students' idea. As a win-win result, the TDS team received foam squeeze cell phones that read "Don't Text and Drive" while the State Farm agent marketed his contact information, which was printed on the back of the phone. Using their football game crowd as a platform, they tossed the toy phones into the crowd and reminded the attendees over the speakers to drive safely and not be distracted by their cell phones.

"Mama Reese" does many things to support her wonderful group of leaders in getting the message out about safe driving, but her personal touch is most impressive. On afternoons, Mrs. Reese reminds her students that they are important to her and they need to be careful so she can see them the next class day. Thank you, Suzanne Reese, for your hard work, dedication and support of the TDS program!

## The Teen Perspective

As the beginning of this school year started, our group became members of Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA). Our teacher, Mrs. Carolyn Schlueter, had visited with Christie Madsen (Teens in the Driver Seat) during her summer conference and asked her to come to our class as a guest speaker. After the presentation by Ms. Madsen our group became excited as we realized this would be an excellent project for our spring regional competition.

Ms. Madsen showed us her slide show, gave a wonderful presentation about Teens in the Driver Seat and asked us to become involved. We got excited about spreading the word. We received permission from the principal to implement the program at our school. Our presentation will be seen by the drivers ed classes at Azle High School and we also hope to work with "Shattered Dreams" this year to spread the word about teens and driving.

We also had the opportunity to attend the first Teens in the Driver Seat Summit in San Antonio. We were addressed by U.S. Representative Ciro Rodriguez and the Pan American/World Health organization in addition to other speakers concerning statistics of teens and teenage driving. We have been busy keeping a file and compiling information and statistics to make Azle teen drivers more aware of the leading cause of death for teenagers.

A local ExxonMobil station in our community has also donated \$500 to help us implement this project in our school. The check is a grant that is given to a school wishing to implement a program to benefit students. We think it was perfect timing and a perfect fit for our presentation.

We are currently recording a video to present to the drivers ed classes and get the word out about Teens in the Driver Seat via MySpace. We also plan to have a car mechanic speak to students about cars they may have worked on that have been involved in fatal crashes and perhaps ask a local tire shop to come to the high school and check the tires and air in student vehicles for safety concerns. We have many plans to work hard to make sure our teens know how to drive safer.

—Charla Neameyer, Azle High School, Junior

*To add your own "teen perspective" in our guest column, please e-mail your thoughts/comments to the TDS webmaster at [tdswebmaster@ttimail.tamu.edu](mailto:tdswebmaster@ttimail.tamu.edu) with "teen guest column" in the subject line.*

**PROVE IT!**

Will you be the first one to develop a video about the dangers of night time driving? PROVE IT—by entering the Driving the Message Contest —Re-fueled and see if your video has what it takes to be #1!

## The Director's Corner

Wow! It's hard to believe it is already December. It seems like we just started the new school year, and it is almost halfway over! It's been a very busy year thus far for Teens in the Driver Seat. The first Summit held in San Antonio in October was a huge success! Thanks to those of you who participated and shared your time and ideas with us. We had over 200 registrants—it was great to see a full house at our first event. Take a look at page 3 and read all about it. We hope you are able to join us next fall in El Paso for the second annual Teens in the Driver Seat Summit. We are considering having events like these in other parts of Texas. Let us know if you think that is a good idea.

We are also excited to announce that the second annual Driving the Message Contest is now underway, thanks to the support of our sponsors State Farm Insurance and the Texas Department of Transportation. We had over 70 entries last year and can't wait to see how many we receive this year. Your creativity and passion help to make this program stronger every year! Please note this year's deadline of February 14, 2009—Valentine's Day.

The holidays will soon be upon us. This is a very dangerous driving time for everyone. Please be aware and try to avoid the top crash risks—driving at night, speeding/racing, distractions, not buckling up and alcohol—during this holiday season. We want you all to have a safe and enjoyable holiday break!

If you haven't started the TDS program at your school yet, there is still plenty of time! Find your regional contact on page 6 of this newsletter and let us know you are interested in getting started. The 2008-2009 school year is off to a great start—let's keep up the good work. We are happy to help any way we can. Thank you for making a difference and helping to save lives!

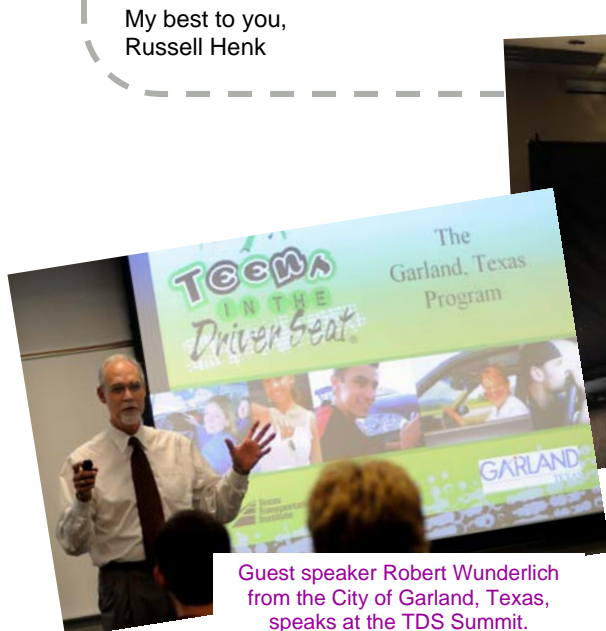
Watch for our next edition in March before the dangerous spring break vacation time of year.

My best to you,  
Russell Henk

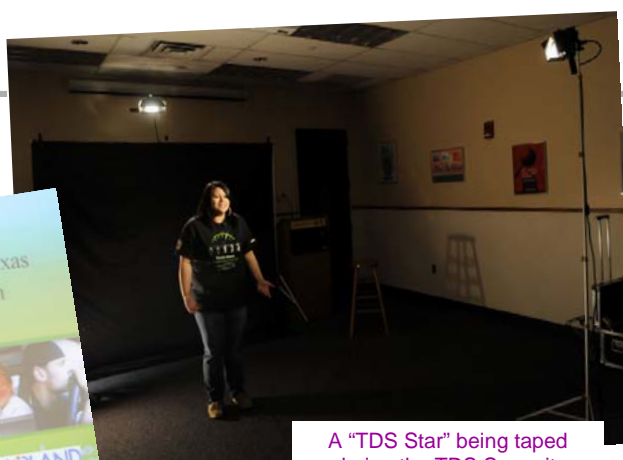


Russell Henk,  
TDS Director

Bernie Fette,  
Director of TDS  
Public Affairs



Guest speaker Robert Wunderlich from the City of Garland, Texas, speaks at the TDS Summit.



A "TDS Star" being taped during the TDS Summit.



Azle HS students attend the first Teens in the Driver Seat Summit.



# Has your school joined TDS in 08-09? If not, join the others that have...

- Academy of Irving (Irving, TX)
- Alba Golden HS (Alba, TX)
- Albany Jr./Sr. HS (Albany, TX)
- Alvin HS (Alvin, TX)
- Americas HS (El Paso, TX)
- Andress HS (El Paso, TX)
- Angleton HS (Angleton, TX)
- Anton HS (Anton, TX)
- Archer City HS (Archer City, TX)
- Argyle HS (Argyle, TX)
- Azle HS (Azle, TX)
- Bethel Christian School (El Paso, TX)
- Brackett HS (Brackettville, TX)
- Brady HS (Brady, TX)
- Bristol Central HS (Bristol, CT)
- Bristol Eastern HS (Bristol, CT)
- Brock HS (Brock, TX)
- Bronte HS (Bronte, TX)
- Calallen HS (Corpus Christi, TX)
- Caldwell HS (Caldwell, TX)
- Caldwell MS (Caldwell, TX)
- Canutillo HS (Canutillo, TX)
- Cedar Park HS (Cedar Park, TX)
- Channelview HS (Channelview, TX)
- Chireno HS (Chireno, TX)
- Connally HS (Waco, TX)
- Cooper Jr./Sr. HS (Cooper, TX)
- Coronado HS (El Paso, TX)
- Creekview HS (Carrollton, TX)
- Del Valle HS (El Paso, TX)
- East Early College HS (Houston, TX)
- Eden HS (Eden, TX)
- Edgewood HS (Edgewood, TX)
- El Paso HS (El Paso, TX)
- Elkhart HS (Elkhart, TX)
- Everman HS (Everman, TX)
- Garland HS (Garland, TX)
- Grandview HS (Grandview, TX)
- Harmony HS (Big Sandy, TX)
- Harmony Science Academy (El Paso, TX)
- Holland HS (Holland, TX)
- Holmes HS (San Antonio, TX)
- Hondo HS (Hondo, TX)
- Immanuel Christian School (El Paso, TX)
- Irvin HS (El Paso, TX)
- Jacksboro HS (Jacksboro, TX)
- John Paul Stevens HS (San Antonio, TX)
- Juarez/Lincoln HS (La Joya, TX)
- Judson HS (Converse, TX)
- Keene HS (Keene, TX)
- Kerens HS (Kerens, TX)
- Killough Lewisville HS (Lewisville, TX)
- Kirbyville HS (Kirbyville, TX)
- La Joya Sr. HS (La Joya, TX)
- Lake Worth HS (Lake Worth, TX)
- Lakeview Centennial HS (Garland, TX)
- Lampasas HS (Lampasas, TX)
- Liberty HS (Frisco, TX)
- Lindale HS (Lindale, TX)
- Littlefield HS (Littlefield, TX)
- Lumberton HS (Lumberton, TX)
- Magnolia HS (Magnolia, TX)
- Mason HS (Mason, TX)
- Millsap HS (Millsap, TX)
- Mission Early College HS (El Paso, TX)
- Mount Enterprise HS (Mount Enterprise, TX)
- Naaman Forest HS (Garland, TX)
- Nacogdoches HS (Nacogdoches, TX)
- North Shore Sr. HS (Houston, TX)
- Palmview HS (La Joya, TX)
- Pasadena Memorial HS (Pasadena, TX)
- Peaster HS (Peaster, TX)
- Poolville HS (Poolville, TX)
- Queen City HS (Queen City, TX)
- Raymond Telles Academy (El Paso, TX)
- Robert E. Lee HS (Baytown, TX)
- Robert E. Lee HS (Tyler, TX)
- Rockwall-Heath HS (Rockwall, TX)
- Rowlett HS (Rowlett, TX)
- Sachse HS (Sachse, TX)
- Sandra Day O'Connor HS (Helotes, TX)
- Sharpstown International HS (Houston, TX)
- Silsbee HS (Silsbee, TX)
- Skyline HS (Dallas, TX)
- South Grand Prairie HS (Grand Prairie, TX)
- South Hills HS (Fort Worth, TX)
- Stafford HS (Stafford, TX)
- Sterling City HS (Sterling City, TX)
- Stockdale HS (Stockdale, TX)
- Sulphur Springs HS (Sulphur Springs, TX)
- Sweeny HS (Sweeny, TX)
- Sweetwater HS (Sweetwater, TX)
- Taft HS (Taft, TX)
- Waco HS (Waco, TX)
- West HS (West, TX)
- Windsor Locks HS (Windsor Locks, CT)
- Winnsboro HS (Winnsboro, TX)
- Zavalla HS (Zavalla, TX)

## Are you on the TDS listserv?

The listserv is a great way to get the most current information and TDS announcements. To join, email your request to the TDS webmaster at [tdswebmaster@ttimail.tamu.edu](mailto:tdswebmaster@ttimail.tamu.edu).

Check out our profile and friend us at [Myspace.com/teensinthedriverseat](http://Myspace.com/teensinthedriverseat)

## Calendar

- December 10**      **WEBINAR—4H Club**
- December 11**      **WEBINAR—4H Club**
- January 9-11**      **BROWNWOOD, Texas—4H Conference**
- February 14**      **DEADLINE: Driving the Message Contest**
- May 1**              **DEADLINE: Post-assessments Due**
- June 10-13**      **COLLEGE STATION, Texas—4H Roundup**

Happy Holidays!

