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May 17, 2013

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

St. Matthew Students Learn That Wearing Seat Belts Pays Off

Bellevue, NE — When Jane Husz, Coordinator of Safe Kids Sarpy/Cass offered a seat belt challenge to Principal, Janet Wilson for students at St. Matthew the Evangelist School, they had no idea what a big impact it would make on the students and families at St. Matthew School.

CDC (Center for Disease Control) information shows that seat belts reduce serious crash-related injuries and deaths by about 50% and a NHTSA (National Highway Traffic Safety Administration) research note provides a statistical projection of traffic fatalities which estimates 34,080 people died in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2012. This represents an increase of about 5.3 percent as compared to the 32,367 fatalities that occurred in 2011. If these projections are realized, 2012 will be first year with a year-to-year increase in fatalities since 2005. “We believe that seatbelts save lives, and this project proves that education along with a fun challenge can make a positive difference.” says Jane Husz.

The project was started in March, with a surprise seatbelt check at St. Matthew School. Each vehicle that dropped off students at the school was assessed for seatbelt compliance. If each occupant in their vehicle had their seatbelt on, the student received a sticker. Each parent received a letter about the project and also a seatbelt safety quiz. The school staff tallied the seatbelt score and there was a 75% compliance, with three grades having 100% seatbelt compliance in their vehicles. Safe Kids presented the school with a “traveling seatbelt compliance trophy” for the winning classes to display. “As you can guess, the students were already starting to educate non-compliant parents and siblings about seatbelt compliance” says Jane Husz. The school is encouraged to continue with the random seatbelt checks next year so that the “traveling seatbelt compliance trophy” can keep this safety message alive.

During the weeks ahead, the students viewed a seatbelt safety YouTube video www.youtube.com/watch?v=UmuJ6FouLvs from the Nebraska Safety Council. Each student also participated in a T-shirt design contest using decals from the Nebraska Safety Council’s “Click-it don’t Risk it” program. Safe Kids Sarpy/Cass then ironed the decals onto t-shirts for each student. Safe Kids Sarpy/Cass judged the T-shirt designs and two students in each class received a prize for the best t-shirt design.

This month, when the second seatbelt check was done, the students were prepared! Seven classes at St. Matthew School were 100% seatbelt compliant and the entire school was 95% seatbelt compliant! “Our efforts really paid off, and I feel that these kids know that seatbelts save lives.” says Jane Husz.

Safe Kids and The Nebraska Safety Council is sponsoring a pizza party for the classes at St. Matthew the Evangelist that had 100% seatbelt compliance. We are inviting the media to our celebration at St.



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Matthew School (12210 S 36th St, Bellevue, NE) on Wednesday, May 22nd at 11:40. Please RSVP to Jhusz@sarpy.com or 402-339-4334 ext. 210 by Monday, May 20th at noon.

Safe Kids Sarpy/Cass works to prevent unintentional childhood injury, the leading cause of death and disability to children under the age of 14. Safe Kids Sarpy/Cass is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing unintentional injury. Safe Kids Sarpy/Cass was founded in 2006 and is led by Sarpy/Cass Department of Health and Wellness.

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