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## **LEESBURG STUDENT WINS DRIVE SAFE ATLANTA CONTEST WITH IDEA FOR VIDEO ABOUT DISTRACTED DRIVING**

**Leesburg County H.S. student wins \$2,000, works with Emmy-winning director  
to turn her script into a finished PSA to debut at Atlanta Auto Show before nationwide TV airing**

ATLANTA, March 14, 2018 -- Rhiannon Belcher, 15, a student at Leesburg County High School in Leesburg, GA, has won the Drive Safe Atlanta PSA Contest. She will be honored at the Atlanta International Auto Show on March 21, when her 60-second TV spot will have its debut showing. Representatives of The National Road Safety Foundation, sponsor of the contest, will present the award, with Harris Blackwood, director of the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety.

Belcher is vice president of her school's chapter of SADD, a national youth group that empowers young people to advocate for health and traffic safety. Her idea for a public service message about the dangers of distracted driving was selected from several dozen entries from teens throughout Georgia. Tomorrow, she will spend a day with an Emmy Award-winning TV director from New York, to film her winning idea and make it into a finished TV public service message. After its debut at the Atlanta Auto Show, it will be broadcast on more than 150 TV stations nationwide and it will be featured on the nationally-syndicated program "Teen Kids News."

The winning script, titled "Split Second Regrets," opens as a mom helps her teen daughter from a wheelchair into the family van, before they drive off. As they approach the teen's school, she sadly looks out the window at students playing in the schoolyard. The video changes to black & white as it transitions back in time, showing the teen driving and picking up her phone to text a friend. The video returns to the present, in color, as the teen recalls playing baseball. She says aloud, "Now I can't even walk, let alone run the bases."

Words come on the screen, saying "21% of teen drivers in fatal crashes were distracted by their phones." We see a close-up of the teen, with tears running down her cheeks, as she cries, "Gabby, I'm so sorry." As the camera zooms back, we realize the girl is in her wheelchair, leaning over to put flowers on her friend's grave. The screen fades to black as a message comes up, saying "A split second can ruin lives forever."

Eliza Fausset, 13, of Atlanta, was named runner-up and will get a \$1,000 prize. She is a student at Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School, where her teacher Aaron Goodson mentored last year's winner, Gabriel Howland.

Drive Safe Atlanta contest is sponsored by The National Road Safety Foundation, a non-profit group that promotes safe driving behavior, in conjunction with the Atlanta International Auto Show, which runs from March 21 – 25, 2018.

“Rhiannon’s message is a powerful one that shows how a split second decision to text while driving can change lives forever,” said Michelle Anderson of The National Road Safety Foundation. “We think it will help make viewers more aware of the dangers of distracted driving.”

“Distracted driving continues to be a major risk for crashes, even as today’s cars are safer than ever, with many innovations to help avoid crashes and protect occupants,” said Shayne Wilson, President of the Metro Atlanta Automobile Dealers Association and Show Manager for the Atlanta International Auto Show. “We are very impressed with the creativity shown by our young people as messengers to their peers and to all drivers that distracted driving is dangerous driving. We hope that everyone who sees Rhiannon’s PSA will be careful to drive safely and turn the phone off.”

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration estimates more than 3,300 people are killed every year due to distracted driving, and tens of thousands more are injured. Texting and cell phone use get the most attention, but drivers can be distracted many other things including use of other mobile devices like GPS, adjusting sound system controls, eating and talking with passengers.

The winning public service message will be available for viewing online after March 21 at [www.nrsf.org/teenlane/contests/drivesafeatlanta](http://www.nrsf.org/teenlane/contests/drivesafeatlanta)

**The National Road Safety Foundation, Inc. (NRSF)** is a 501 (c)(3) non-profit charitable organization that for more than 55 years has been dedicated to reducing crashes, deaths and injuries on our nation’s highways by promoting safe driving habits through greater public awareness.

NRSF produces documentaries, educational programs and public service campaigns for broadcast and for use in safety, educational and enforcement programs by police, teachers, traffic safety agencies, healthcare professionals, youth advocacy groups and other grass-roots related agencies, as well as federal, state and local government agencies. NRSF programs, which are free, deal with distracted driving, speed and aggression, impaired driving, drowsy driving, driver proficiency and pedestrian safety. The Foundation also works with youth advocacy groups and sponsors contests to engage teens in promoting safe driving to their peers and in their communities. For information or to download free programs, visit [www.nrsf.org](http://www.nrsf.org) or [www.teenlane.org](http://www.teenlane.org).

**About the Atlanta International Auto Show.** The 36<sup>th</sup> Atlanta International Auto Show is scheduled for March 21-25, 2018. This showcase of over 500 new import and domestic cars, light trucks, vans and sports utility vehicles will have more than 23 different manufacturer lines represented. It is the one of the largest events of its kind in the Southeast and the largest consumer show held annually at the Georgia World Congress Center.