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## **14-YEAR OLD WINS DRIVE SAFE ATLANTA CONTEST WITH IDEA FOR VIDEO ABOUT DISTRACTED DRIVING**

**Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School student wins \$2,000, works with Emmy-winning director to turn his idea into a finished PSA to debut at the Atlanta International Auto Show before nationwide TV airing**

ATLANTA, March 22, 2017 -- Gabriel Howland, an 8<sup>th</sup> grade student at the Atlanta Neighborhood Charter School has won the first Drive Safe Atlanta PSA Contest. The 14-year old will receive a \$2,000 prize and will be honored at the Atlanta International Auto Show on March 22 when his 30-second TV spot has its debut showing. Harris Blackwood, director of the Georgia Governor's Office of Highway Safety, will help present the award.

Howland's idea for a public service message about the dangers of distracted driving was selected from nearly 130 entries from teens throughout the state, and he spent a day with an Emmy Award-winning TV director from New York who helped take the winning script and turn it into a finished TV ad. After its debut at the Atlanta International Auto Show, it will be broadcast on more than 220 TV stations nationwide.

The 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 22 – 26, 2017.

Annie Dennehy, 14, of Acworth, GA and a student at Durham Middle School, was named runner-up and will get a \$1,000 prize.

Howland's winning entry shows a large group of people in either blue or orange shirts. Some people in blue shirts step forward, one at a time, into a spotlight and say, "It wasn't my fault. The other guy was drunk," and then "It wasn't my fault. The other guy ran a red light." Someone in an orange shirt steps

forward and says, "It was my fault. I was on my phone." He gets emotional and adds, "Those people I hit, the mom and the girl, they could die."

The lights come on to reveal one hundred people – ten in orange shirts and the rest in blue, as all those in orange say together, "It was my fault. I was on the phone." The spot ends as words come on the screen, saying "One in ten crashes is caused by a cell phone. Turn it off!"

Howland, who hopes to work in theater eventually, wrote the public service message for a class project for his drama teacher Aaron Goodson.

"We received many great ideas from teens throughout Georgia, but we were especially impressed with the dramatic way Gabriel chose to communicate the message important about cell phones and distracted driving," said Michelle Anderson of The National Road Safety Foundation. "His idea puts faces on the grim statistics, which makes them even more compelling."

"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 know anyone who sees Gabriel's message 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 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 50 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 Atlanta International Auto Show is preparing to celebrate their 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary during the 2017 show, scheduled for March 22-26, 2017. This showcase of over 500 new 2017 import and domestic cars, light trucks, vans and sports utility vehicles will have over 28 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.