

TEACHERS IN ILLINOIS, N. DAKOTA, WASHINGTON NAMED TEACHERS OF EXCELLENCE BY NATIONAL DRIVER ED TEACHERS GROUP AND THE NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY FOUNDATION

PORTLAND, OR, July 19, 2016 -- Driver education teachers from Illinois, North Dakota and Washington have been selected by their peers to receive the Teacher Excellence Award at the national conference of the American Driver & Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA) here. The Teacher Excellence Awards are given by The National Road Safety Foundation, a non-profit group that creates driver safety education materials and makes them available at no cost to teachers and schools, police, traffic safety advocates and youth organizations. The award is named in memory of Dr. Francis Kenel, a traffic safety engineer, former director of the AAA, author of driver ed teacher training materials and a mentor to countless driver education instructors.

Chosen by their peers to receive the 2016 Teacher Excellence Award, which carries with it a cash stipend, are Judy Weber-Jones, a teacher at Gibson City-Melvin-Sibley High School in Gibson City, IL; Becky Hardy of Turtle Mountain Community High School, Belcourt, ND and Yusuf A. Quidwai of Q Driving School in Omak, WA. They were honored at a luncheon July 19th at the ADTSEA national conference in Portland, OR.

“Driving instructors are a dedicated group whose mission is to save lives and prevent needless tragedy by helping young people learn how to drive safely and responsibly,” said David Reich, public relations director of The National Road Safety Foundation. “The teachers we honor have been selected by their peers as the best of the best, consistently demonstrating creativity and enthusiasm in the lifesaving work they do.”

Winner Judy Weber-Jones, driver ed teacher for 31 years, has worked hard to change laws in Illinois, including a No-Texting Ban, tougher GDL laws and increased fines for speeding. She helped initiate the Illinois Department of Transportation’s Operation Teen Safe Driving program, mentoring 105 schools throughout the state in the first year. She also helped develop, with noted race car driver Andy Pilgrim, a distracted driving unit that became part of the state’s driver ed curriculum. Teaching driver education, she said, “has been the best decision in my life.”

Becky Hardy has been teaching driver education for 38 years, beginning in a small town that had one stop sign and no paved roads. A registered EMT technician, she spent many years as a volunteer for the ambulance squad in her hometown of Rolla, ND. While serving as an officer in the North Dakota Driver & Traffic Safety Education Association, she has helped bring higher standards to the state’s driver ed curriculum and has presented at the group’s annual conference for new driver ed instructors. “Traffic safety education has always made sense to me,” she said. “Why would we want anyone to be less than safe? I love teaching driver education because it is so important and because the students truly want to learn to drive safely.”

Yusuf Quidwai operates Q Driving School in Omak, WA. An educator at the local and state level for more than 30 years and past president of the Washington Traffic Safety Education Association, he has worked to update the state’s traffic safety curriculum and licensing knowledge questions. He has trained instructors and helps find driver ed teachers to help continue driver ed programs at school throughout the state, while personally teaching a three small public schools in order to keep their programs alive. “I love to teach this life-long skill to young students,” he said. “My goal and prayer for these young drivers is to keep them accident-free and ticket-free for life.”

Rich Hanson, who heads the selection committee for ADTSEA, said, “Driver education instructors generally are passionate about ensuring that their students become safe drivers, but our Teacher Excellence Award winners have consistently gone above and beyond in that mission. We are proud to recognize them and hope they will inspire others to excel.”

The American Driver and Traffic Safety Education is the professional association that represents traffic safety educators throughout the United States. As a national advocate for quality traffic safety education, the group creates and publishes policies and guidelines for driver ed and conducts conferences and workshops for teachers. It was instrumental in creating the new driver education curriculum standard issued recently by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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 behavior through greater public awareness. NRSF produces documentaries, educational programs and public service campaigns for broadcast and for use in safety, educational and enforcement programs. NRSF offers its material FREE of charge. More than a million copies of the Foundation’s films and public service campaigns have been distributed for use in schools and by police, traffic safety agencies, healthcare professionals, youth advocacy groups and other grass-roots related agencies, as well as to corporations, the armed forces, federal, state and local government agencies. NRSF programs deal with distracted driving, speed and aggression, impaired driving, drowsy driving, driving skills, senior driving and more. The Foundation also works with key youth advocacy groups and sponsors contests to engage teens in promoting safe driving to their peers and in their communities. For more information or to download free programs, visit www.nrsf.org or www.teenlane.org