

STUDENTS TAKE ON POLICE IN CLICK IT SEAT BELT CHALLENGE

Auto Body Clinic, Peabody Police Department Sponsor Senior Safety Day And Seat Belt Contest to Keep Kids Safe During Most Dangerous Time of the Year

PEABODY, MA, May 26, 2004 — Peabody Veterans Memorial High School students are getting a chance to beat the police at their own game today by taking on members of the Peabody Police Department in the inaugural Click It Seat Belt Challenge. The centerpiece of Senior Safety Day at the high school, the contest tests the speed and dexterity of students who vie for the title of the fastest clickers in the city by jumping into a car, buckling up and rotating positions until everyone sits behind the wheel one time and fastens their seat belt. The team with the fastest time wins and gets the ultimate prize — a chance to take on the police *mano a mano*, or in this case, belt to belt.

Sponsored by Auto Body Clinic, the Peabody Police Department and the Governor's Highway Safety Bureau, the seat belt challenge is designed to be fun — but the program's goal is a serious one. The event coincides with the start of Senior Week, which starts on June 9 and concludes with the senior prom on June 13 — a time that is especially dangerous for teen drivers. According to the Governor's Highway Safety Bureau, teens are more likely to be injured in a car accident in June than in any other month. Overall, 21,500 Massachusetts teens and young adults were injured in traffic crashes in 2000 alone (source: Massachusetts Registry of Motor Vehicles).

I see the unfortunate aftermath of auto accidents every day in my business, and I know what can happen when people forget to buckle up. That's why we are working with the Peabody Police Department to promote seat belt use and safe driving. Statistics indicate that seat belts reduce the risk of death or serious injury in a motor vehicle crash by up to 50%. As this competition will show, buckling up takes just seconds — but they are seconds that can literally save lives, said Stephen Arena, Sr., owner and president of Auto Body Clinic.

With the prom and graduation just days away, this is an exciting and happy time for students. Unfortunately, it can also be a time when their minds are on things other than driving safety. By focusing on simple steps like buckling up when they get behind the wheel, we aim to keep students safe and make the prom season a happy season, said Peabody Police Chief Robert L. Champagne.

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Massachusetts falls below the national average when it comes to seat belt use. In 2002, only 51% of Massachusetts drivers used seat belts, compared with 75% of drivers nationwide.

In addition to the seat belt challenge, Senior Safety Day also features a dramatic Jaws of Life demonstration by the Peabody Fire Department; the Massachusetts State Police's Roll-over Simulator that shows graphically what happens to car occupants who don't wear seat belts; and mock DWI tests with student volunteers wearing special goggles that demonstrate the effect of too much alcohol on the senses.

The Governor's Highway Safety Bureau has also arranged for Crash Test Dummies Vince and Larry to make a special appearance at the event.

According to Arena, Senior Safety Day is the first in a series of initiatives that Auto Body Clinic is undertaking to promote driving safety. We are committed to helping our communities by offering programs that create public awareness about staying safe behind the wheel. As a locally-based business, we believe it is important to bring private sector support to these kinds of programs, particularly at a time when so many cities and towns are under a financial burden, added Arena.

Founded in 1978, Auto Body Clinic operates an Express drop-off service on Route 114 in Peabody and state-of-the-art repair centers in Beverly and Reading. Its staff of highly trained, experienced technicians is dedicated to providing high quality, reliable work and on-time delivery for repairs ranging from fender-benders to more serious accidents. A family-owned and operated business, Auto Body Clinic is celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2003. To learn more about the Auto Body Clinic Express, call 978/278-1000 or visit www.autobodyclinic.com.