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TEACHERS FROM 5 STATES CITED AS TEACHERS OF EXCELLENCE BY NATIONAL DRIVER ED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION AND THE NATIONAL ROAD SAFETY FOUNDATION

NEW YORK, June 23, 2018 -- Five driver education teachers from Hawaii, Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota and Vermont have been selected by their peers in the American Driver & Traffic Safety Education Association (ADTSEA) as Teachers of Excellence. The award carries with it a cash stipend from 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 2018 Teachers of Excellence are Kel Hirohata, who teaches at Waipahu H.S. in Waipahu, Hawaii; Andrew Unseth, who teaches in the public schools in Shakopee, Minn.; Susan Carney Lammerding, a teacher in the Arlee School District, Arlee, Mont.; Dale Ludwig, who teaches in the Minot Public Schools in Minot, North Dakota; and Richard Ritter, an instructor at the Vermont Green Driving School in Burlington, Vermont.

David Reich, public relations director of The National Road Safety Foundation and a member of the ADTSEA Board of Directors, said, "Driving instructors are a dedicated and passionate group whose mission is to save lives and prevent needless tragedy by helping young people learn how to drive safely and responsibly. The teachers being honored with the Teacher Excellence Award this year have set impressive examples of creativity and enthusiasm in the important work they do."

Teacher Excellence honoree **Kel Hirohata**, a driver ed teacher for five years, got interested in driver education on his first day teaching, when he noticed how careless many students were as they crossed the highway in front of the school. He organized the Youth for Safety Club in his school, and students now promote traffic and pedestrian safety not only on the school campus, but throughout Honolulu and the state. A strong believer in the power of the youth voice, he says, "People don't want to listen to an old dude like me, but when they see a young person advocating for an issue like traffic safety, people listen."

Dale Ludwig has been teaching for 28 years, with most of those years as a driver ed teacher and chair of the driver education program in the Minot Public Schools. He has also been active in promoting and enhancing driver education at the state level and assisted in writing two driver ed curriculums for North Dakota. He describes driving as "a life or death situation that cannot be learned from a video game." Minot High School principal Keith Altendorf says Dale "has a special way of relating to his students, which helps him stress the seriousness and importance of driver education."

Andrew Unseth had been teaching for ten years before he realized that he was setting a poor driving example for his own teenage children who were soon to be driving. He took driver ed training courses and became a driver ed instructor in his school. He has since developed a pilot program for the Minnesota Dept. of Public Safety for parents of soon-to-be new drivers. He would like to see greater parental involvement in the driver ed process in his state, where none is currently mandated.

When **Susan Carney Lammerding**'s son took driver ed nearly 20 years ago, there were no local driver ed instructors. She had already been teaching in the school system for ten years, so she did additional studies in traffic safety education at Montana State and became the classroom and behind-the-wheel driving teacher for the Arlee schools in 2001. In 2014, she also became an adjunct professor at Montana State, helping teachers become driver education instructors. She is a strong believer in having parents as effective partners in the driver education process.

Richard Ritter saw firsthand the need for driver education while working as a volunteer and professional emergency medical technician during and after college, when he witnessed the aftermath of many teen DUI crashes. After a career in technology, he saw the field of driver education as a way to contribute and make a difference, and he has been teaching at the Vermont Green Driving School for five years. He feels the increased use of technology in cars we drive requires a better understanding of how to interact with that technology, which requires more instructional time in class and behind the wheel. He also would like to see GDL laws in Vermont strengthened to include nighttime restrictions on new drivers.

"We are proud to recognize these Teachers of Excellence and we know they will inspire others to be passionate and effective teachers of this important life skill," said Rich Hanson, who heads the selection committee for ADTSEA.

The Teacher Excellence Awards, given by The National Road Safety Foundation, are 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.

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 (NRSF), a non-profit organization, has supported ADTSEA's Teacher Excellence Awards program for nine years. For more than 55 years, NRSF has created driver education programs and materials for free distribution to teachers, police, traffic safety agencies, youth advocacy groups and others. NRSF has programs on distraction, speed and aggression, drinking and driving, and drowsy driving. The group also sponsors contests for teens in partnership with SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions), NOYS, FCCLA and Scholastic, as well as regional teen contests in partnership with auto shows in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles and Washington, DC. To view and download free programs and for more information, visit www.nrsf.org or www.teenlane.org.

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