

For Immediate Release:
October 20, 2014

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**Jesse White Announces Teen Driving Deaths Down Nearly 55 Percent as this Week Marks
National Teen Driver Safety Week**

Awards Neuqua Valley High School for its outstanding driver education program

Secretary of State Jesse White kicked off National Teen Driver Safety Week by announcing that teen driving deaths are down by nearly 55 percent in Illinois. White presented the 2014 Teen Driver Safety Award to Naperville's Neuqua Valley High School for its outstanding driver education program.

Illinois' nationally heralded Graduated Driver Licensing (GDL) program was cited as a key contributing factor to the decline in fatalities. According to the Illinois Department of Transportation, there were 155 teen driving deaths in 2007. Since White's efforts to overhaul the GDL law took effect in 2008, teen driving fatalities have decreased by nearly 55 percent – with 71 teen driving deaths in 2013.

"I am pleased this law is working as we intended," said White. "The goal all along was to save lives. When I first convened the Teen Driver Safety Task Force, we knew we faced a difficult task. We knew automobile crashes were the leading cause of death for teens. We worked hard to strengthen our GDL program and make it one of the nation's best. While too many teens are still dying on our roads, we can take some solace that far fewer teens have died in crashes since we greatly strengthened our GDL program."

Illinois' GDL program better prepares novice, teen drivers by giving them more time to obtain valuable driving experience while under the watchful eye of a parent or guardian, limiting in-car distractions, and requiring teens to earn their way from one stage to the next by avoiding traffic convictions. White emphasized the important roles that parents, high schools and driver education instructors play in preparing safe and responsible teen drivers. State and national traffic safety organizations have praised Illinois' stronger GDL program as one of the best in the nation.

"Neuqua Valley High School's driver education program is one that should be emulated by other schools around the state," said White. "They are using technology as an ally in an effort to empower both teens and parents by making their driver education classrooms virtually paperless. All class assignments are posted online, and may be accessed by teens and parents. In addition, they have developed and posted online a behind-the-wheel video containing tips for parents to utilize for practice driving exercises."

"It is an honor to receive this prestigious award from Secretary of State Jesse White," said Dr. Robert McBride, Principal of Neuqua Valley High School. "The Neuqua Valley Driver Education staff is committed to excellence in everything it does. The sum total of their efforts is a program that empowers safe students and builds strong decision-making literacy. With course content that is literally a matter of life and death, I am glad they are behind the wheel. They are teachers who are very deserving of recognition by the Secretary of State."

To learn more about the state's Graduated Driver Licensing program, visit www.cyberdriveillinois.com.

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