UNC Charlotte and AAA Carolinas’ Foundation for Traffic Safety Recognizes the Safest Communities for 2006

The Center for Transportation Policy Studies at UNC Charlotte has completed its fourth annual Highway Safety Information Program in coordination with AAA Carolinas’ Foundation. The project concentrated on evaluating city and town police department safety programs in North and South Carolina. AAA Carolinas’ Foundation issued a media press release explaining the process of gathering and analyzing the data in which “Cities were chosen based on crash statistics, number of law enforcement officers per capita, presence of a formal traffic safety program and existence of a special traffic division.” The program has grown in success over the past four years, and has become a desired award for each of the municipalities across the Carolinas. Each year’s research looks at the previous year’s crash data, and is compared with crash data from the North Carolina Department Of Transportation (NCDOT) and the South Carolina Department of Public Safety (SCDPS).

The municipalities are broken down into population categories. Each state has three categories that consist of a population of over 30,000, a population range of 10,000 to 30,000, and then a population of less than 10,000. 2006 proved to be a competitive year between the municipalities with Huntersville, NC and Goose Creek, SC taking the top position in the over 30,000 population categories, Tarboro, NC and Newberry, SC ranking at the top for the 10-30,000 category, and finally Highlands, NC and Due West, SC ranking first in the population category of less than 10,000.

After analysis of the data, “the [North Carolina] cities were honored for their efforts in traffic safety in 2006 during a Foundation-hosted awards luncheon held Thursday, Oct. 25, in Durham” at the Washington Duke Inn and Golf Club. The awards for North Carolina were presented by Lyndo Tippett, Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Transportation, and Tom Crosby, president of AAA Carolinas’ Foundation for Traffic Safety. The AAA press release noted that “The three Traffic Safety Communities of the Year used a range of tactics – from zeroing in on impaired drivers to listening to and responding to resident concerns – to improve city roads.” The Huntersville police department received the award of Traffic Safety Community of the Year, in the category of a population greater than 30,000 and Sgt. Tommy Shankle responded that “Our guiding rules are the 3 E’s: education, engineering, [and] enforcement.”

The South Carolina cities were honored at an awards luncheon on Monday, Oct. 29, in Columbia. Jim Schweitzer, Director of the South Carolina Department of Public Safety, and Tom Crosby, president of AAA Carolinas’ Foundation for Traffic Safety, presented the awards. They acknowledged Goose Creek, SC on their second year in a row of holding the Outstanding Traffic Safety award. Sgt. Shawn Crafton of Goose Creek stated, “If I can give one person more knowledge, they spread it around. We pride ourselves on high visibility. We have a reputation for enforcement.” Another notable South Carolina city was Newberry, SC that ranked first for the third year in a row in the 10,000 to 30,000 category.

While acknowledging the police department’s outstanding achievements, Crosby called on the public’s responsibility to contribute to their community’s traffic safety. He stated, “All of us interested in public safety have to convince judges, prosecutors, and legislators that poor driving habits are a vehicular version of Russian roulette, we need to recognize communities that work hard and are successful in reducing traffic crashes.” In coordination with the Center for Transportation Policy Studies and AAA Carolinas’ Foundation, the fourth annual recognition of
Outstanding Traffic Safety Communities proved to be a great success. “The Traffic Safety Foundation is supported by contributions from AAA Carolinas and its more than 1.7 million members to provide information and resources to educate the public on traffic safety as well as influence members to provide information and resources to educate the public on traffic safety as well as influence behavior to improve safety on the roads of North and South Carolina.” The Center for Transportation Policy Studies conducts this program annually, and will begin collecting data for the next annual program at the start of the Spring semester in 2008.

The Center for Transportation Policy Studies, directed by Dr. Edd Hauser, is an organization dedicated to the research and study of transportation issues and transportation related policy. The Center is located in 113 McEniry.

Jennifer Fox  
Research Assistant  
Center for Transportation Policy Studies