



Ford Driving Skills for Life Honors Unsung Heroes of Highway Safety, Marks 15 Years of Global Safety Program

- Ford Driving Skills for Life recognizes six individuals as Unsung Heroes of Highway Safety for their dedication to making roads safer for all
- Ford Fund and the Governors Highway Safety Association conducted a nationwide search for distinguished honorees, as part of the 15th anniversary of Ford Driving Skills for Life
- Ford Driving Skills for Life is the innovative, award-winning safety program that provides new drivers with free, advanced safety training in the U.S. and more than 40 countries

Washington, D.C., Sept. 13, 2018 – Martha Tessmer tragically lost a son in a distracted driving crash. Jacob Smith was nearly killed and his life forever changed by a distracted driver. John Shallenberger is a sheriff's deputy who knows the heartbreak of families and communities when safety takes a back seat to dangerous behavior or inexperience behind the wheel

These dedicated safety advocates are among those being honored as Unsung Heroes of Highway Safety in recognition of the 15th anniversary of Ford Driving Skills for Life.

Ford Motor Company Fund and the Governors Highway Safety Association (GHSA) conducted a nationwide search for the most committed leaders in traffic safety and selected six honorees for their distinguished service. These Unsung Heroes of Highway Safety are the guests of honor at a special reception at the historic Russell Senate Office Building in the nation's capital. The event will include demonstrations of Ford Driving Skills for Life's innovative drugged and drunk driving suits, and an opportunity to experience WheelSwap – a unique virtual reality activity that promotes harmony between drivers and cyclists.

“Throughout the past 15 years with Ford Driving Skills for Life, we've met hundreds of individuals who share our passion and commitment to traffic safety,” said Jim Vella, president, Ford Motor Company Fund. “The six unsung heroes we are recognizing today have dedicated themselves— personally and professionally – to making roads safer in their local communities and beyond. On behalf of everyone at Ford Motor Company, we thank each of our honorees for their important work, and for representing the countless safety advocates, trainers, parents and police officers who help keep our families safe every day.”

The Unsung Heroes of Highway Safety are:

Andy Pilgrim – Founder, Traffic Safety Education Foundation, Bowling Green, Kentucky

Andy is a race driver with a passion for safety and combating the epidemic of distracted driving. He also helps parents understand they are the biggest influence on how their children drive.

John Shallenberger – Deputy Sheriff, Tazewell County Sheriff's Office, Pekin, Illinois

During 2005-2006, Tazewell County lost 15 teens to car crashes within 15-months. With John's help, the community formed the Tazewell Teen Initiative that led to Operation Teen Safe Driving. One of the components was Ford Driving Skills for Life. Since 2007, Illinois Department of Transportation data show the state has experienced a 50 percent reduction in teen fatalities.

Jacob Smith – Global Road Safety Activist and Speaker, Whitehouse, Texas

In 2014, Jacob and his friends were returning home when they were hit head-on by a distracted driver. Jacob does not remember the crash. He sustained spine and facial injuries, and a Traumatic Brain Injury. He now travels the country mobilizing young people to focus on safety.

Sandy Spavone – Executive Director, Family, Career and Community Leaders of America, Reston, Virginia

Sandy has worked with youth peer education national programs for 16 years. She launched National Youth Traffic Safety Month held each May.

Martha Tessmer – Educational outreach coordinator, Impact Teen Driving, Fresno, California

Since 2007, Martha has combined her 38-year career as an educator and instructional designer with lessons learned from the tragic loss of her son, Donovan, to a distracted driving car crash.

Purnima Unni – Creator/Program Manager, “Be in the Zone” teen motor vehicle safety initiative, a flagship program of the Pediatric Trauma Department at Monroe Carell Jr. Children’s Hospital at Vanderbilt, Franklin, Tennessee

More than 73 high schools have participated in the “Be in the Zone” program, reaching nearly 93,000 students, parents and teachers with the “no texting while driving” message.

Vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for teenagers in the United States and much of the world. Ford Driving Skills for Life was established in 2003 by Ford Fund, GHSA, and a panel of safety experts to teach newly licensed drivers necessary skills beyond standard driver education programs. Ford Driving Skills for Life focuses on skill development in key areas that are critical factors in more than 60 percent of accidents – hazard recognition, vehicle handling, speed, and space management. The program has conducted safe driving clinics in all 50 states, Washington, D.C. and Puerto Rico, and is active in more than 40 countries around the world, adapting its free training sessions to reflect the unique environment and driving conditions in each location.

“We developed Ford Driving Skills for Life for Her to assist women learning to drive in Saudi Arabia, we connected more than 32,000 students across the U.S. with a virtual assembly, and even created video games to engage young people,” said Jim Graham, manager, Ford Driving Skills for Life. “The Ford Driving Skills for Life team is always on the lookout for emerging safety trends so we can be ready with innovative ways to educate new drivers.”

Ford Driving Skills for Life has reached more than 1 million new drivers through hands-on ride and drives, school safety sessions, and online education through the Driving Skills for Life Academy.

For more information, please visit: www.drivingskillsforlife.com

About Ford Motor Company Fund

Ford Motor Company Fund is the philanthropic arm of Ford Motor Company. Established in 1949, Ford Fund invests in transformational programs that advance innovation, empower people, promote social mobility and improve community prosperity. Ford Fund works with local and global partners to create opportunities in education, encourage safe driving, enlist employee volunteers and enrich community life. For more information, visit <http://community.ford.com>, or join us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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