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BUCKS FOR BUCKLING UP

Personal Responsibility Reaps Financial Rewards

May 9, 2011 – These days, who couldn't use an extra buck? Your chance to earn a buck is **Wednesday, May 18, 2011** beginning at 11:30 am at the **Bowie Town Center in the parking lot behind Bed Bath and Beyond**. The Prince George's Community Federal Credit Union, which has donated the cash, is joining the Maryland State Highway Administration's Highway Safety Office and the **Bowie Police Department** in ***Buckle Up For A Buck*** program. Law enforcement officers and safety advocates will distribute \$1 bills to drivers who have all occupants buckled up securely in their vehicles. Those riding unrestrained will receive educational materials about the effectiveness of seat belts and child safety seats in saving lives and reducing injuries.

Nearly 600 people in Prince George's County lost their lives in motor vehicle crashes between 2005 and 2009. Data shows that throughout 2008, someone was killed in Prince George's County every three days in a crash. Extensive efforts within the county have improved the overall seat belt use rate from less than 80% in 2004 to a current compliance rate of more than 91.9%. However, Prince George's County continues to lead the State with the highest number of motor vehicle deaths and the continued proper use of seat belts is the best way for motorists to protect themselves on the roadways.

Through May, area law enforcement agencies in Prince George's County will take a zero tolerance approach when it comes to enforcing Maryland's seat belt law as part of *Click It or Ticket*. Law enforcement officers would rather write a ticket for not using a seat belt rather than showing up at a door to tell a family that their loved one was killed because they were not buckled up.

"The *Click It or Ticket* campaign is not about writing tickets, it is about preventing traffic injuries that abruptly end lives and shatter the lives of those injured or left behind. Proper seat belt usage is unequivocally the primary reason why most drivers and passengers avoid serious physical injury when involved in a traffic crash," said **Chief John Nesky**.

The ***Buckle Up For A Buck*** program promotes seat belt usage and raises awareness of the traumatic results for those who choose not to buckle up.

Here are some basic facts to consider:

- ❖ **The risk of being involved in a fatal crash is significantly greater at night as compared to the daytime.**
 - Nationally, the nighttime vehicle fatality rate is 3 times higher than the daytime rate.
 - Data show a decline in seat belt use among fatally injured occupants as it gets later in the evening. Nationally, seat belt use reaches lowest levels between midnight and 4 a.m.
 - In Maryland, an overwhelming majority of severe/fatal unbelted crashes happen during the lowest light/nighttime hours. With 43% of the reported unbelted incapacitating injury or fatal crashes occurring between 8 p.m. and 4 a.m., the nighttime hours are grossly overrepresented statewide.
 - In Prince George's County, approximately 66% of all reported unbelted driver/occupant fatalities occur between 8 p.m. and 4 a.m.
- ❖ **Seat belts save lives – they are the best defense against injuries and fatalities.**
 - The force of an impact from a 30 mph crash is like falling headfirst from a three-story building.
 - Seat belts, when used by passenger vehicle occupants 5 and older, saved an estimated 12,713 lives in 2009 – more than 72,000 lives from 2005 through 2009 – and 267,890 lives from 1975 through 2009.
 - Worn correctly, seat belts reduce the risk of fatal injury by 45% for front seat passenger car occupants — and by 60% for pickup truck, SUV and van occupants.
 - In fatal crashes in 2009, 77% of passenger vehicle occupants who were thrown from their vehicles were killed. However, only 1 percent of crash victims who were buckled up were totally ejected from their vehicles, compared to 31% of those who were unbuckled.
 - Motorists are 75% less likely to be killed in rollover crashes if they are buckled up.
 - A seat belt is your best defense against a drunk or aggressive driver.

❖ **Crashes don't just happen on long trips.**

- Most crashes occur within 25 miles of home, in good weather.
- Wear your seat belt - every ride, every time, day and night.
- Nationally, there were 23,382 occupants of passenger cars, pickup trucks, vans, and SUVs killed in motor vehicle traffic crashes in 2009, and 53% of fatally injured passenger vehicle occupants were **NOT** wearing seat belts at the time of the fatal crashes.

❖ **Needless deaths and injuries that result from non-use of seat belts cost society an estimated \$26 billion annually in medical care, lost productivity and other compensation related costs.**

Seat belt patrols and other stepped-up law enforcement activities will be conducted during the national *Click It or Ticket* enforcement mobilization, which runs May 9 - June 6. Prince George's County law enforcement officers will be out in force stopping and ticketing unbelted motorists. Unless you have money to burn and want to risk a ticket or worse – your life -- remember to *Click It or Ticket* day and night.

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Click It or Ticket is an annual national mobilization campaign sponsored by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the Maryland State Highway Administration's Safety Office. Aimed at increasing seat belt use among all drivers and passengers in the United States, the campaign relies heavily on enforcement and education.