News Release - For immediate release with photo

10/17/2022

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**Photo Caption:** In May 2022, Tuscarawas County Health Department staff partnered with local law enforcement and other agencies to promote traffic safety at a Safe Communities Safety Day event at the Uhrichsville McDonald’s.

**Federal Grant Funds from Ohio Traffic Safety Office Help Save Lives in Tuscarawas County**

DOVER- The Tuscarawas County Health Department was recently awarded $38,500 in federal traffic safety funding from the Ohio Department of Public Safety’s (ODPS) Ohio Traffic Safety Office (OTSO). This will be the seventh year that the Safe Communities grant has been awarded to the Tuscarawas County Health Department.

The Safe Communities Coalition is comprised of partners from various agencies and organizations in Tuscarawas County who help share educational messages and promote traffic safety. “The Coalition works closely with partners and greatly relies on the different perspectives they bring to the table to help with the success of traffic safety efforts,” explained Abbie Benton, Safe Communities Program Coordinator for the Tuscarawas County Health Department. “We are thankful for each partner and their dedication to improving traffic safety in Tuscarawas County.”

During the past grant year (October 1, 2021 – September 30, 2022), the Tuscarawas County Health Department’s Safe Communities Program attended multiple community outreach events throughout the County where traffic safety education was shared with the public. In May, Safe Communities Partnered with the Uhrichsville McDonald’s to host a community safety day. In August, Safe Communities partnered with the Ohio State Highway Patrol and Ohio’s Students Against Destructive Driving to hold the Annual *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* kickoff event at the Tuscarawas Valley Farmers Market in Dover. Other events included working in some of the local high schools to educate youth about the importance of safe driving through events such as Homecoming and Prom Safety education.

In 2021, Tuscarawas County experienced 12 fatal crashes that resulted in 13 fatalities. So far in 2022, Tuscarawas County has experienced 7 fatal crashes resulting in 7 fatalities. Motorcycle related, impaired driving, and seatbelt noncompliance are among the top contributing factors in the 2022 fatal crashes.

To save lives and improve the quality of life for our citizens, the Tuscarawas County Health Department will use the grant funds to raise public awareness and continue educating the public about traffic safety issues. The funds are passed through OTSO from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration to support the efforts of safety partners statewide and focus on the following traffic safety messages: Stay Alive Don’t Text and Drive; Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over; Click It or Ticket; and Lookout for Motorcycles.

Competitive grant proposals are accepted and reviewed by OTSO. The competitive grant process solicited grant proposals from state agencies, non-profit organizations, colleges, universities, hospitals, political subdivisions and other interested groups within selected Ohio counties and jurisdictions (based upon the number of fatal crashes). To find out more about the Safe Communities Program, visit: <http://www.tchdnow.org/safe-communities.html>

For more information about OTSO and statewide efforts to improve safety on Ohio’s roadways, visit <http://ohiohighwaysafetyoffice.ohio.gov/index.stm>

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