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YOUTH COME TOGETHER TO HELP NEW ORLEANS REBUILD

Hundreds of Students Participate in Community-Service Projects as Part of 2007 SADD National Conference

NEW ORLEANS (July 8, 2007) – To kick off the 2007 SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) National Conference, SADD youth from 26 states across the country are teaming up with local students for a day of community service. They'll be painting classrooms at schools in the New Orleans Recovery School District and doing cleanup and replanting flowerbeds in New Orleans City Park. This year's conference theme, *"Rollin' on the River ... Defining the Current,"* reflects the students' commitment to help New Orleans rebuild in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina.

"Coming to New Orleans is an opportunity for us to do something that will have a lasting impact," said Daniel Vocelle of Vero Beach, Florida, the 2006-2007 SADD National Student of the Year. "Giving back to a community – especially one that's in so much need of help – is part of the SADD mission."

SADD has a very active chapter base in Louisiana, including more than 450 chapters in schools and communities across the state. When Hurricane Katrina hit Louisiana back in 2005, a call for help went out to all SADD chapters – and the response was overwhelming. Students across the country collected truckloads of school supplies and other items that were distributed to needy communities by Louisiana SADD State Coordinators Janice Williams and D.C. Sills. Today's community-service projects give SADD volunteers a chance to visit some of the schools they may have helped.

"We are excited to be in these schools and connecting with the local students face-to-face and shoulder-to-shoulder," said SADD President and Executive Director Penny Wells. "New Orleans is facing a long road to recovery, and we are proud to do our part to help."

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The SADD National Conference is held in a different city each year, and this year's conference is July 8-11 at the Hilton New Orleans Riverside Hotel. Students will participate in workshops and activities to develop leadership skills, share ideas, and learn new prevention strategies that can be put into action back home in their schools and communities.

"Hosting the SADD National Conference in New Orleans is a great privilege," said Colonel James E. Champagne of the Louisiana Highway Safety Commission and member of the SADD National Board of Directors. "The positive energy these youth bring to our great state is an example for others to follow and gratifying for the people of New Orleans."

The Louisiana Highway Safety Commission is a sponsor of the conference, along with 1 2 1 Direct Response, Sparhawk Corporation, and Boston Market Corporation. Sparhawk Corporation is helping to sponsor the community service projects, and Sparhawk CEO Michael Harakal III will be rolling up his sleeves and joining the group of student volunteers. Here are other highlights of the conference.

- o **Opening Ceremonies –** Sunday, July 8, 7:00 – 9:10 p.m.
- o **Parade and Natchez Steamboat River Cruise –** Monday, July 9, 4:00 – 9:30 p.m.
- o **SADD Awards Banquet and Masquerade Ball** – Tuesday, July 10, 6:30 – 11:30 p.m.
- o **Closing Ceremonies** – Wednesday, July 11, 9:45 – 11:45 a.m.

Founded as Students Against Driving Drunk in 1981 in Wayland, Massachusetts, SADD has grown to become the nation's premier peer-led youth education and prevention organization with 10,000 chapters in middle schools, high schools, and colleges. In 1997, in response to requests from SADD students themselves, SADD expanded its mission, and chapters now use the name Students Against Destructive Decisions to reflect this broadened focus. SADD is dedicated to promoting positive decision-making and addressing attitudes that are harmful to young people and sponsors programs that focus on issues such as underage drinking, other drug use, impaired driving, and teen violence and suicide. More information about SADD is available at **sadd.org.**

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