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### **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **New Program Encourages Teens to Be Role Models for Safety**

GLENDORA, CA (November 13, 2007) – A new program aimed at encouraging teens to protect younger children, as well as themselves, by becoming knowledgeable role models who buckle up correctly, is being announced today by the Glendora Police Department.

A collaboration between the Glendora Police Department and SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A., the national non-profit organization specializing in the protection of child passengers, will recruit and train volunteers from the local area, including teens, to run child safety events that encourage kids ages 5 to 11 to use boosters in the car. The volunteers will be trained to administer the “5-Step Test” to assess whether or not a child fits the automobile safety belt or needs to use a booster.

“Teens are important role models for younger kids who look up to them,” said Glendora Police Chief, Chuck Montoya. “Understanding the importance of setting an example for younger kids is a powerful motivator to get them to buckle up and it could substantially reduce the number of children at risk of serious injury or death in a traffic collision,” he said.

A recent survey in the San Gabriel Valley showed that 25% of young teens were not buckled up at all. This program hopes to shrink that percentage, reduce injuries and save lives.

“Using a booster seat is essential for kids who are too big for a child safety seat but not yet big enough to fit in a safety belt designed to fit an adult,” said Stephanie Tombrello, Executive Director of SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. “Boosters reduce severe injuries by 59% but

only 20% of kids who need boosters are using them. Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger recently called for more education to encourage booster use. This project is designed to answer that call," she said.

In addition to providing community training opportunities, the two-year, \$200,000 grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, will help SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. in offering a variety of resources for parents and professionals. Services will include a toll-free telephone line in English and Spanish, an award-winning Web site, and a series of Educator Workshops for advocates and staff of social service agencies, hospitals, law enforcement, and day care facilities. The grant also will fund several safety seat checkups so families can have their safety seats inspected and learn to install them correctly.

"Proper use of child safety seats and booster seats can be confusing," said Christopher J. Murphy, Director of the Office of Traffic Safety. "That's why we encourage parents and caregivers to get them checked. Proper installation and use significantly increases your child's safety."

SafetyBeltSafe U.S.A. conducts free safety seat checks throughout the year at various locations as a part of a training program for health and safety professionals. At checkups last year, more than 90% of the seats checked were not safe for the child or needed adjustment. Even well-educated, safety-conscious parents often make unsuspected mistakes that can result in serious injuries to their children. According to the California Highway Patrol, more than 80% of the small children killed in car crashes would have survived if they had been properly buckled up.

California law requires children to ride in a safety seat or booster, in the back seat, until they are at least age 6, with some exceptions. However, most children need to use a safety booster seat to lift them up so the shoulder and lap belts are properly positioned until they are age 8 to 10 or even older.

Local teen groups and others who wish to get involved in the project, and parents who want to register for a safety seat checkup, can go to [www.carseat.org](http://www.carseat.org) or call the Safe Ride Helpline: (310) 222-6860 or (800) 745-SAFE. For Spanish: (310) 222-6862 or (800) 747-SANO.

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