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PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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D2 Awareness Training Aims to Change Attitudes in Young Drivers About Distracted Driving and DUI

PUTNAM COUNTY, TN – As a result of two grants recently awarded to the Putnam County Sheriff's Office by the Tennessee Governor's Highway Safety Office, PCSO School Resource Officers under the direction of Deputy Steve Elrod will be offering D2 Awareness training to young drivers throughout Putnam County. The new training program will focus on changing the attitudes of young drivers about the consequences they face when driving while distracted or under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

"We are excited about these new tools and the ability they give us to effectively engage our young drivers in training that will help them truly see the impact of their decisions while behind the wheel of an automobile," said Sheriff Eddie Farris. "It is our goal that through this program we can further reduce the number of accidents and potential deaths resulting from distracted driving and driving under the influence."

The two grants that were recently awarded to the Putnam County Sheriff's Office were a STEER (Safety, Traffic, Education, Enforcement and Response) grant and a Distracted Driving Program grant from the Tennessee Governor's Highway Safety Office totaling \$41,620.00. These funds were used to purchase a Portable Virtual Distracted Driver Interactive Simulator and the Distracted and Impaired Classroom Kit. The remaining funds will be used to conduct Distracted Driving and DUI Awareness training throughout Putnam County. In addition, funding has been allocated for the purposes of high visibility enforcement designed to help reduce the incidents of distracted driving and DUI related crashes.

"It is the goal of the Putnam County Sheriff's Office to partner with State and Federal agencies in order to promote the safety and well-being of our community," said PCSO Grants Manager Michael Ronczkowski. "These grants will allow us to add a vital training program for young drivers in our community that will help change attitudes about distracted driving and driving under the influence."

The Portable VT Touch Training Device is an all-in-one computerized virtual training simulator with a 27" touch screen that comes pre-loaded with the One Simple Decision® program, the first simulation-based impaired and distracted driving program designed to prevent destructive driving behaviors among teens and young adults. One Simple Decision® also tracks driving violations real time displaying them on the screen as they occur. Driving violations captured include speeding, swerving, running stop signs or signal lights, making wrong turns, driving in the bike or center lanes, etc. The "experiences" can be done individually so you can have a student use the system anywhere from 5 minutes for a single distracted drive to about 25 minutes for the entire experience including reality checks and impaired driving.

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In addition, the Putnam County Sheriff's Office has also purchased the Distracted and Impaired Classroom Kit which provides the tools to demonstrate and educate about the dangers of impaired and distracted driving using an engaging and hands-on approach. Especially for young people who may feel invulnerable to harm and the consequences of drunk driving, participants realize they are as susceptible to impairment as everyone else when they have difficulty performing a Standard Field Sobriety Test while wearing the Fatal Vision Impairment Goggles or attempting the Smash Match™ Impairment Challenge. The lesson is further reinforced by viewing the attention grabbing DVDs. Distracted driving becomes a relevant awareness and prevention lesson when using Fatal Reaction® to simulate the impact of talking on a cell phone or texting while driving. The Distracted Driving Awareness and NEW AIM™ Distracted Driving posters also help demonstrate to young drivers the increased difficulty of driving while under the influence.

"This new virtual training program will be a great addition the current Putnam County Schools driver education programs because it can be used in many circumstances from school assemblies, to Back-To-School nights, and other events and meetings throughout the County. The system can be used by an individual privately for one-on-one training or demonstrated in front of a larger audience for classroom instruction," said Sam Brooks, Personal Learning Coordinator for Putnam County Schools, who was recently named one of the Top 30 Technologists, Transformers & Trailblazers by the Center for Digital Education.

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