



## “Battle of the Belts” Raises Cheyenne Teen Safety Belt Use

During May 2010 Cheyenne high schools held a “Battle of the Belts” competition to increase safety belt use among students. As a result, all three high schools increased safety belt use, with Central showing the largest improvement with a 15 percent increase. The Battle of the Belts event was kicked off with *Alive at 25* assemblies on safe driving practices and the importance of wearing a safety belt for all students at Cheyenne high schools.

During the first week of May, drivers or passengers at each of the high schools who were observed by school resource officers wearing their safety belts received prizes to reward students for good behavior and to encourage all students to wear safety belts. Prizes include a student-designed t-shirt promoting safety belt use, iPod Shuffles funded by the WyHy Federal Credit Union, t-shirts from the University of Wyoming, and bags and keychains from Wyoming DOT.

The winning high school was determined based on a comparison of safety belt use field surveys conducted at the high schools before and after the Battle of the Belts initiative. Central High School won the competition by increasing safety belt use from 55 percent to 70 percent, and earned a prize of \$2,000 for the school. Triumph and East High Schools also showed improvement in buckling up, each increasing use by 10 percent, and each receiving a check for \$500 recognizing their participation.

A wide range of Cheyenne organizations were involved in event planning, including the Cheyenne Metropolitan Planning Organization, Cheyenne Police Department, Cheyenne Regional Medical Center Injury Prevention, Wyoming DOT, Wyoming Highway Patrol, Central High School, Triumph High School, East High School, and the Mayor’s Youth Council.



Central High School Principal Matt Strannigan holds up the check awarded for winning the Battle of the Belts competition.

The competition received significant news coverage including a feature story in the Wyoming Tribune Eagle and a television report by CBS NewsChannel 5.

The Battle of the Belts was part of a program to implement the Cheyenne Transportation Safety Management Plan completed in 2008. The effort was funded by the Wyoming Department of Transportation's Highway Safety Program.

In Cheyenne, from 2004 to 2008, 68 people age 15 to 18 injured in traffic crashes were not wearing a safety belt. Wyoming has the second lowest safety belt use rate in the country. According to surveys conducted by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in Wyoming just two thirds (67.6 percent) of people were observed wearing safety belts in 2009, compared to a national average of 84 percent. When lap/shoulder safety belts are used properly, they reduce the risk of fatal injury to front-seat occupants in passenger vehicles by 45 percent and the risk of moderate-to-critical injury by 50 percent.



Members of the Mayor's Youth Council wear the t-shirts designed as prizes for the Battle of the Belts Competition, which read "Cheyenne Wants You to Buckle Up".



Students and Principal Mirich at East High School receive a check for \$500 for participating in the event and increasing safety belt use.



Triumph Principal Helenbolt stands with students as the school receives a check for participation in Battle of the Belts.

### **Battle of the Belts Sponsors**

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