Texas Municipal Courts Education Center (TMCEC) and the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) honored 24 municipal courts with the Municipal Traffic Safety Initiatives Awards during TMCEC’s annual Municipal Traffic Safety Initiatives Conference on April 2-4, 2013, at the Omni Southpark Hotel in Austin for their outstanding contributions in promoting traffic safety in their community.

The Municipal Traffic Safety Initiatives Awards encourage friendly competition among the municipal courts to increase awareness, education, development, and implementation of traffic safety initiatives, which in turn, improve a community’s overall quality of life. Nominees were assessed on community outreach and education efforts involving traffic safety initiatives, including efforts to increase traffic safety while decreasing traffic crashes, traffic fatalities, juvenile DUI, child safety seat offenses, red light running, and other traffic related offenses. All municipal courts in Texas were eligible to receive this award.

Eighteen courts were selected to receive awards: four in the large volume courts, serving a population of 150,000 or more; nine in the medium volume courts, serving populations between 30,000 and 149,999; and five in the small volume courts, serving a population below 30,000. Six courts were also selected as honorable mentions. The courts listed below received recognition for their initiatives.

Texas Municipal Courts Association (TMCA) President and Lewisville Municipal Judge Brian Holman presented the 2013 Municipal Traffic Safety Initiatives Awards to municipal courts based on population size: Alvin, Harker Heights, Hickory Creek, Lakeway, and Universal City were selected from the low volume courts; Bryan, Burleson, College Station, Conroe, Friendswood, Frisco, La Porte, Mansfield, and Socorro from the medium volume courts; and Arlington, El Paso, Houston, and Irving from the high volume courts. Hutto, Lewisville, Odessa, Pasadena, Sweeny, and Windcrest were also selected to receive honorable mentions for their dedication and traffic safety projects.
Alvin

Low Volume

Traffic safety is important to the Alvin Municipal Court, especially reaching out to children. Judges Donna Starkey and Bill Pannell regularly interact with children through career days, mentoring, and reading to students.

In 2012, the court hosted a traffic safety campaign and coloring contest and had over 200 students participate, their best turnout yet. The court also hosted an educational quiz contest covering traffic safety. For its biggest project of the year, the court put on a 5K educational fun run at a local park, with booths along the race course with free materials. Everyone was a winner!

As part of their traffic safety outreach, the Alvin Municipal Court also encourages citizens to become involved in promoting traffic safety in the community. The court makes public service announcements on their local cable channel and uses email to reach citizens in the Alvin community.

Harker Heights

Low Volume

The Harker Heights Municipal Court hosted a summer day camp in 2012 called “Camp Heights” where students learned about the importance of seat belt safety, and participated in both a poster contest and a mock trial.

The court continues to encourage local high school students to participate in the Teen Court program. One Teen Court attorney even took the issue of traffic safety from the courtroom to the classroom, organizing a week of traffic safety events and speakers at her high school.

During Municipal Courts Week, the court worked with the public library to put up a display case full of traffic safety materials, hosted two traffic safety story time programs, and assigned a different color to each day of the week that represented the different colored traffic signs used by TxDOT.
Hickory Creek

Low Volume

The Hickory Creek Municipal Court works hard to reach out to local children on traffic safety issues. The court sponsored a traffic safety poster contest in 2012, and the posters were hung on display in the courthouse lobby. The police department voted on the winners, who got gift certificates as prizes.

Additionally, the court uses creative sentencing with juveniles, having them submit a series of reports related to their violation and participate in Third Millennium online classes.

Hickory Creek Municipal Court has also been proactive in displaying traffic safety information in the courthouse lobby, and had up creative displays of the Scarecrow from The Wizard of Oz during Thanksgiving that said, “If I only had a brain, I would not text and drive” and Santa during Christmas who sang, “He sees you when you’re sleeping, he knows when you’re awake, he knows if you’ve been bad or good, so don’t text and drive for goodness sake.”

Hutto

Low Volume

The Hutto Municipal Court was an honorable mention for its efforts in 2012 to focus on younger children with many of their traffic safety efforts.

Court staff hand out children’s books provided by TMCEC and talk to the children about riding their bikes and respecting school rules. The court also allows juveniles to complete their community service with the court, having them sort through traffic safety materials that can go on display.

In 2012, the court participated in Youth and Government Day at the local high school for the 7th year, playing a “Steps in a Trial” game.

The Hutto Municipal Court also took part in Municipal Courts Week, National Night Out, and a warrant round up. In the future, the court would like to develop a bulletin board for the lobby with a different traffic topic each month.
Lakeway

The Lakeway Municipal Court continues to be innovative in its approach to traffic safety. One of the inventive things that Judge Madison does in his court is embrace creative sentencing. He has had two defendants assist him in creating public service announcements on traffic safety issues involving emergency vehicles and highway traffic workers as part of their deferred disposition, and had another defendant build brochure racks to hold traffic safety materials in the courthouse.

Judge Madison also does many local presentations on traffic safety, has created his own distracted driving posters, and has created multiple presentations focusing on traffic safety that play in the courtroom and lobby.

Lakeway also held its second annual Municipal Court Traffic Safety Night in 2012, featuring a presentation from “Danger Without Intentions,” and traffic safety was again the focus on Municipal Court Week events.

Sweeny

Honorable mention, the Sweeny Municipal Court, worked with the Police Chief and City Administrator to make traffic safety a focus for all city departments in 2012.

Working collaboratively, the city adopted a policy where all city employees must now wear seat belts while operating a city vehicle. The Court’s first traffic safety initiative of the year was participating in the Great Texas Warrant Round Up.

During the summer, Sweeny held a “Traffic Day in Sweeny” event and students participated in activities ranging from crossing a mock intersection to measuring themselves for booster seats. In the winter, the court participated in Municipal Courts Week, hosted an information booth during the “Christmas in the Park” event, and when Santa visited City Hall, he gave out goodie bags with traffic safety materials.
Universal City

Over the last year, the Universal City Municipal Court developed some fun partnerships. The court teamed up with the Citizen’s Police Academy and hosted a mock court docket. Court staff created citations and police reports for defendants like Popeye and Wile E. Coyote, leading to an amusing and informative event.

The court also formed a partnership with students from the Randolph High School Student Council who entered the “Team Up Challenge,” sponsored by the San Antonio Spurs’. The Randolph students presented a project on distracted driving and were one of the top five winners. After their win, the students came into court and put on their presentation for defendants.

Additionally, for the first time, the court participated in the city’s annual Veteran’s Day parade, entering the warrant car which was decorated with signs and the court’s slogan, “Alert Today, Alive Tomorrow,” while court personnel walked with the car and distributed free materials.

Windcrest

The Windcrest Municipal Court received an honorable mention in 2012, including its collaboration with the local elementary school to sponsor a “Bike Right” poster drawing contest. The posters were displayed at the court during Municipal Courts Week. The court hopes to host another poster contest in 2013.

For the first time in 2012, Windcrest participated in National Night Out and the court staff handed out traffic safety coloring books. The assistant court clerk also participated in career day at the local elementary school and did a show and tell with court-related items.

In the future, the Windcrest Municipal Court hopes to put “Tools of the Road” tips in the community newsletter, and collaborate with schools to put on a mock trial.
Bryan

Medium Volume

The Bryan Municipal Court had two goals for 2012: re-connecting with local law enforcement to bring traffic safety to the forefront of awareness and implementing innovative ways of making traffic safety a local priority.

To achieve these goals, the court organized several events. The court partnered with the local MADD chapter and hosted a Municipal Courts Week event that featured the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension rollover convincer and DWI prevention simulator.

The court also hosted a 4th grade class for a courthouse tour and Teen Court mock trial, organized a coloring contest for children with prizes donated by local businesses, and went to a local high school to distribute TxDOT and TMCEC materials to parents waiting in the drop-off line.

The court staff members are motivated to further increase their outreach efforts in 2013.

Burleson

Medium Volume

The Burleson Municipal Court is doing a lot with local teens. In 2012, the court entered into a new partnership with Third Millennium for online classes, which allows defendants to take classes that are more interactive.

Teens going through Teen Court had an option, as their community service project, to participate in Support Our Soldiers, a community-based project to aid military members through letters. The Teen Court program also participated in a teen court competition at the Texas Wesleyan School of Law and partnered with MADD to establish a teen victim impact panel.

The Court also participated in the city’s safety fair, Shattered Dreams, and hosted its first Teen SWAG Affair, which stands for Sober. Wait. Awareness.

Guidance. The event featured 24 vendors, the A&M rollover convincer and the DWI simulator.
College Station

Medium Volume

The College Station Municipal Court participates in many outreach efforts and local events to promote traffic safety.

In 2012, the court participated in the Shattered Dreams program, which was put on for the entire junior and senior classes of a local high school. The court also held question and answer sessions for the Citizens Police Academy, the Citizens University, and the Career Connection for junior and high school students.

The court hosted a local Cub Scouts troop and two groups of 80 middle school students as part of Aggie Outreach.

During pre-trial conferences, the court shows a video about the huge problem with DWI cases in Australia.

Finally, the court continues its Teen Court program, which stresses the importance of safe driving habits and following the rules of the road, and requires offenders to serve as jurors in other Teen Court cases.

Conroe

Medium Volume

To address the growing problem of distracted driving, the Conroe Municipal Court is thinking creatively. The court has partnered with distraction.gov for information and videos, always has a supply of pamphlets and brochures available, and the court shows AT&T’s anti-texting videos in the lobby and courtroom before trials and arraignments.

Distracted driving was also the focus on the court’s National Night Out display.

Conroe Municipal Court is also continuing its past successful programs, including innovative sentencing for juveniles, the “How is My Driving?” bumper sticker program, the “Wall of Memory,” participation in no refusal events, outreach in the local schools, and involvement in the statewide warrant round-up.
Friendswood

Medium Volume

The Friendswood Municipal Court was motivated to focus on traffic safety after attending a past TMCEC Traffic Safety Conference.

One of the big focuses for the court has been the Teen Court program, which began in 2011. To bring more attention to the program, in 2012 the court prepared a display on the Teen Court, which was presented at the “State of the City” address. Court personnel also spoke to the Rotary Club about the Teen Court, which now allows defendants to complete their community service with them. The court also reached out to local schools and got 38 teens to volunteer with the Teen Court as jurors and attorneys. In 2012, the Court also participated in the statewide warrant round up, hosted a “Driving Safely” class for city employees, assisted in Shattered Dreams, got a new display case of the court lobby, and set up a new Facebook account to locate defendants with warrants.

Frisco

Medium Volume

The Frisco Municipal Court has partnered with the local fire department, school district, and private donors on a fun and unique project to educate elementary school students on safety issues: the Frisco Fire Safety Town.

A townscape complete with working traffic signals and street lights, the entire town is scaled down to child-size in an effort to allow children hands-on learning in a safe setting.

The Frisco Municipal Court participates in Shattered Dreams and the annual Great Warrant Round Up. The court also features traffic safety information on its website, offers a Teen Court program, gives tour and presentations to community groups, and used money from the court’s technology fund to purchase license plate readers for the police department.
La Porte

Medium Volume

The La Porte Municipal Court takes a pro-active approach to traffic safety and believes in the importance of educating citizens, young and old. In its outreach efforts, the court participates in Municipal Courts Week, National Night Out, the statewide warrant round up, Shattered Dreams, the city’s annual safety fair, and no refusal weekends. The court also addresses a variety of safety issues with their juveniles through the R.O.C.K. Program, which is a form of alternative sentencing. The program shows the students the dangers of drinking and driving with the help of the police department’s SIDNE, as well as through classroom sessions and community service.

La Porte Municipal Court, L to R: Mary Ann Harrison, TMCA President Brian Holman presenting the award, and Judge Denise Mitrano.

The La Porte Municipal Court continues to use the ever unpopular “How’s my driving?” bumper stickers and have added parenting classes this year, plus has helped the police department purchase license plate readers.

Lewisville

Medium Volume

The Lewisville Municipal Court is an honorable mention because of its efforts to promote traffic safety by educating the public as they come in contact with the court.

Court clerks embrace their contact with the public so that they can furnish valuable traffic safety information to a substantial number of people on a daily basis. The court provides pamphlets, 24/7 voice recordings when calling the court, and televisions in the lobby display helpful information.

In 2012, the court continued its Teen Court program in conjunction with the Town of Flower Mound, and their team won the mock trial contest at Texas Wesleyan School of Law. The court also again participated in the Great Texas Warrant Round Up and Municipal Courts Week. Lastly, Judge Brian Holman spoke at a career day at a local school.

Lewisville Municipal Court, L to R: Sue Kennedy and, presenting and receiving the award, TMCA President, Judge Brian Holman.
Mansfield

*Medium Volume*

The Mansfield Municipal Court took on a big project in 2012 and planned a Bike Safety Day for the local community. The court worked with the city marshals to organize registration, inspections, free helmets, a bike safety course, goodie bags, and free food. Supplies were collected from Bike Texas, the North Texas Council of Government, TMCEC, NHTSA, and local restaurants. They even got the police chief to offer to cook 400 hot dogs! Unfortunately, the event had to be called off for bad weather, but the court was resourceful and was able to put on much of the Bike Safety event during the city’s Fall Festival. And Mansfield Municipal Court has already started planning another Bike Safety Day for 2013, demonstrating the importance of dedication and perseverance when addressing traffic safety issues.

Other events and projects undertaken by the court include participating in the statewide warrant round up, organizing a joint marshals task force, and developing the Move Over Detail, which heightens awareness for drivers to slow down or move over for emergency vehicles.

Odessa

*Medium Volume*

Honorable mention, the Odessa Municipal Court, has been focusing its traffic safety efforts on the importance of seat belts due to an increase in fatalities in the area. In the court’s lobby there are Click It or Ticket brochures and displays in English and Spanish. In November of 2012, the court worked with the local police and fire departments to put on a child car seat clinic and seat belt education event for the public and city employees before the holiday travel season. They also informed people how to get free child safety seats if they could not afford them, and gave away TxDOT brochures and pens with buckle-up messages.

That same month, each city employee’s paycheck included information about seat belts and a pledge to always buckle up correctly.
**Pasadena**

**Medium Volume**

The Pasadena Municipal Court is an honorable mention because of its outstanding effort to draw attention to the importance of having proper child safety seats.

The court partnered with local carpenter and sign shops to create a 16-foot Santa sleigh float for the Pasadena Strawberry Festival Holiday Light Parade. The float featured several rows of children dressed as elves and securely fastened in an age and height appropriate child safety seat. The vehicle pulling the float shared the court’s message: Buckle Up Your Little Elves. The float also discouraged texting while driving by sharing that Santa never texts with his sleigh full of presents. Court staff walking in the parade distributed TMCEC and TxDOT materials. The float was voted the best overall and was seen by thousands, both live and on TV.

**Socorro**

**Medium Volume**

The Socorro Municipal Court believes the more information the better, and is always looking for information to give to the public.

The court lobby is full of brochures and other resources, and while children wait for their parents, court clerks hand out coloring books or information packets to the kids, believing kids can help educate their parents and adults.

At the end of each jury trial, Judge Alejandro Vidales explains to the jurors the importance of obeying all traffic laws and ordinances.

Judge Vidales also tweets valuable traffic-related information and participates in Read Across America, career days, and other local school events.

Believing “a fine is not fine,” the court has also emphasized public-private partnerships to offer services to defendants, including the use of *Operation Lifesaver* materials.
Arlington

High Volume

The Arlington Municipal Court has emphasized traffic safety through collaborations with the mayor, city council, and police department.

In 2012, the city enacted a new law prohibiting the use of a cell phone while driving in Arlington. A new police initiative has officers riding on school buses to identify drivers who fail to stop for the bus as required by law.

The municipal court does its part for traffic safety by using the latest technology and taking an active role in educating residents and visitors of traffic laws.

The court also participates in warrant round-ups, no refusal weekends, career days, National Night Out, the City at the Market event, and Arlington’s EcoFest and 2012 Employee Health Fair. Additionally, court personnel often visit local schools.

El Paso

High Volume

In 2012, the El Paso Municipal Court was able to hire a Juvenile Case Manager, who has been very active in the community.

The new Juvenile Case Manager, along with the Sentencing Coordinator, put on presentations about juvenile court proceedings at eight local schools. Judge Richard Olivo has also been a presenter at some schools, and also hosted a Boy Scout Troop in his court.

Judge Olivo also developed a deferred adjudication program for the offense of driving while using a cell phone that allows first-time offenders to place a no talking-no texting sticker on their cars for 90 days. Through a partnership with the local TxDOT office, the court was able to get 25,000 of these stickers printed.

Local community partnerships continue to be vital to the court’s mission, and currently over 60 agencies participate in the court’s community service program.
Houston

The Houston Municipal Court has proactively worked in the area of traffic safety through multiple initiatives. Programs and projects include mini-court clinics, family days, public forums, high school tours, visits with local civic groups and churches, and Town Hall meetings. The court also participates in Municipal Courts Week and the Great Texas Warrant Round-Up, where it is the lead agency in the Gulf Coast region.

Additionally, the court has developed partnerships with Mothers Against Drunk Driving, TxDOT, and Texas A&M Agri-Life Extension. Partnering with these and other community organizations in their outreach efforts is key, as it helps the court extend its reach.

Irving

The Irving Municipal Court has continued an emphasis on reducing crashes through education, engineering, and enforcement.

The court participated in numerous events in 2012. At both the Teen Driver Safety Fair and the Irving Employee Safety Fair, the court had booths displaying traffic safety materials and visitors got to play traffic safety games. At the Beat the Heat event at a local library, racecars where displayed and children learned many valuable traffic safety lessons.

During Municipal Courts Week, Judge Rodney Adams, Court Director Wayne Lambert, and Chief Prosecutor Candace Chappell participated in Open Line, a local call-in television show, where they discussed the court’s role in promoting traffic safety. Judge Laura Anderson also hosted a training for area court clerks on traffic safety.

To combat the growing problem of distracted driving, Juvenile Court Judge David Fraga now asks teens to sign a pledge not to text while driving, and the court has also enhanced its Juvenile Case Manager Program.
2014 Municipal Traffic Safety Initiatives Awards

Purpose:
To recognize those who work in local municipalities and have made outstanding contributions to their community in an effort to increase traffic safety. This competition is a friendly way for municipalities to increase their attention to quality of life through traffic safety activities.

Eligibility:
Any municipal court in the State of Texas. Entries may be submitted on behalf of the court by the following: Judge, Court Clerk, Deputy Court Clerk, Court Manager, Court Administrator, Bailiff, Marshal, Warrant Officer, City Manager, City Councilperson, Law Enforcement Representative, or Community Member.

Awards:
Award recipients will be honored at the Texas Municipal Courts Education Center (TMCEC) Traffic Safety Conference that will be held on April 2-4, 2014 in Houston, Texas at the Hilton NASA Clear Lake Hotel.

Nine (9) awards will be given:
- Two (2) in the high volume courts: serving a population of 150,000 or more;
- Three (3) in the medium volume courts: serving populations between 30,000 and 149,999; and
- Four (4) in the low volume courts: serving a population below 30,000.

Award recipients receive for two municipal court representatives, complimentary conference registration, travel to and from the 2014 Municipal Traffic Safety Initiatives Conference to include airfare or mileage that is within state guidelines, two nights’ accommodations at the Hilton NASA Clear Lake Hotel, and most meals and refreshments.

Honorable Mention: If there are a number of applications that are reviewed and deemed outstanding and innovative, at the discretion of TMCEC, honorable mentions may be selected. Honorable mentions will be provided complimentary conference registration to attend the Traffic Safety Conference and will be recognized at the Traffic Safety Conference.

Deadline:
Enteries must be postmarked no later than Tuesday, December 31, 2013.

Presentation:
Award recipients and honorable mention winners will be notified by February 14, 2014 and honored during the Traffic Safety Conference to be held April 2-4, 2014 in Houston, Texas at the Hilton NASA Clear Lake Hotel.

Details:

What Can You Do?
- Get involved
- Add traffic safety materials to your city’s and court’s websites
- Host a warrant round-up with nearby cities
- Invite school groups into your court
- Start a proactive fine collection program
- Recognize situations where a “fine is not fine”
- Join the TMCEC Save A Life listserv on traffic safety
- Approve adequate funding, staff, and support for your municipal court
- Speak to local civic groups on the importance of traffic safety
- Build community partnerships
- Set up a traffic safety exhibit
- Ask law enforcement officers and prosecutors to work together to identify at-risk drivers in your community
- Create meaningful sentencing alternatives for repeat offenders, especially juveniles and minors using deferred disposition
- At the close of a trial after sentencing, remind jurors and court observers of the importance of compliance with traffic laws
- Adopt a safety belt policy for all city employees
- Participate annually in Municipal Courts Week and incorporate traffic safety outreach

Traffic safety benefits can go far beyond the traffic stop!
Statistics show that Texas has a distinctly significant traffic safety problem. In 2011, approximately 1,165 (39% of all) fatal crashes in Texas were speed-related (NHTSA, 2012). Such crashes in Texas constitute 12% of all fatal speed-related crashes in the United States (NHTSA, 2012). Perhaps most concerning, more Texans are killed in traffic crashes and alcohol-related crashes than in any other state (NHTSA, 2012). In 2011, approximately 3,016 people died on Texas roadways (NHTSA, 2012). We can and must do better.

In FY 12, nearly five million cases adjudicated in Texas municipal courts involved non-parking traffic violations. Municipal courts are the primary venue for adjudicating traffic-related crimes in Texas. On behalf of the Texas Municipal Courts Association (TMCA) and Public Outreach Committee, I would like to encourage you to become involved in your community to address and work to increase traffic safety.

TMCA President,
Presiding Judge Brian Holman
Lewisville

Speakers’ Bureau

TMCEC has a speakers’ bureau. Knowledgeable speakers throughout Texas can be drawn upon to speak in their community on the importance of traffic safety. There are resources, materials, and PowerPoint presentations that will assist you as you speak in the community, organize field trips and mock trials at your court, or as you provide outreach into your community, which are located on the TMCEC Municipal Traffic Safety Initiatives website at www.tmcec.com.

To place your name on the speakers’ bureau, please fax this form to TMCEC at (512) 435-6118.

Add Me to the Speakers’ Bureau

Name: ________________________________ Court: ________________________________
Tel. # ____________________________ Email: ________________________________
A grant from the Texas Department of Transportation has provided funding for a curriculum for grades K-12 on traffic safety issues.

Driving on the Right Side of the Road is a collaborative effort between the Law-Related Education Department of the State Bar of Texas, Law Focused Education, Inc., Texas Municipal Courts Education Center, Texas Municipal Courts Association, regional education service centers, and teachers in local school districts.

Many of the activities and lessons are designed for use by a resource person in the classroom, such as a municipal judge, to provide information and to answer any questions that will arise.

The Texas Municipal Courts Association has set up a speakers’ bureau to support teachers’ requests for resource persons. Email tmcec@tmcec.com if you are willing to speak in local classrooms.

The TMCEC website (www.tmcec.com) will contain sample presentations and PowerPoints, as well as information sheets to help resource persons develop their presentations.

Generally the materials are only available to teachers who attend a training, although sample lessons will be made available on the TMCEC website, at the TMCEC regional programs in FY 14, and in The Recorder.