

## **SAFETY BELT USE BY WHEATON NORTH STUDENTS**

On April 13<sup>th</sup> the Wheaton North Drivers Education staff conducted a safety belt study from 2:15 – 2:30 pm as student drivers exited after school. We observed 171 cars driven by Wheaton North students. Of the 171 student drivers 113 (66%) had their seat belts on, while 58 (34%) were not buckled up. We also identified a total of 94 passengers in the cars driven by their classmates. There were 55 (59%) passengers who did not have their seat belt on, while only 39 (41%) had put their safety belt on.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) has announced that between 2004 and 2005, 10 percent of nonusers of safety belts adopted the habit of buckling up. According to the DOT, in the past five years, safety belt use in the United States has increased steadily from 71 percent in 2000 to 82 percent this year. The DOT suggests that a safety belt usage rate of 82 percent is preventing 15,700 fatalities, 350,000 serious injuries, and \$67 billion in economic costs associated with traffic injuries and deaths every year. The increase in belt use over the past year is estimated to have prevented 540 fatalities, 8,000 serious injuries, and \$1.8 billion in economic costs.

### Safety Belt Facts:

- One out of every five drivers will be involved in a traffic crash this year.
- 75% of traffic deaths occur within 25 miles of home. More than half of all injury producing motor vehicle collisions occurs at speeds under 40 m.p.h.
- In a 30 m.p.h. collision an unbelted 160 lb. person can strike another passenger, be thrown through a windshield, and/or slam into the vehicles interior with 4,800 lbs. of force.
- One out of four serious injuries to passengers is caused by occupants being thrown into each other.
- In the last decade 68,000 teens have died in car crashes.
- 65% of teen passenger death occurs when another teenager is driving.
- In 2001 5,341 teens were killed in passenger vehicles involved in crashes. Two-thirds of those killed were not buckled up.
- Three out of four families with child safety seats fail to use them correctly.