

**Motorist spared of significant injury or death by use of seatbelt is recognized by the Hanover County Sheriff's Office and DMV and presented the Saved by the Belt Award.**

On October 27, 2008, at 10:37 p.m., Hanover Sheriff's Office units were dispatched to Pole Green Road for a two-vehicle head-on collision. Investigation revealed that a vehicle was traveling east on Pole Green Road. The vehicle went off the right edge of the paved surface in a curve, causing the driver to lose control. The vehicle slid sideways, crossed the double solid line, and was struck by Mr. Jon Konetski's vehicle, which was heading west on the same road.

Mr. Konetski was unaware of the other vehicle's loss of control and subsequently had no time to react as he rounded the curve. The damage was extensive and both cars were instantly totaled. Unfortunately, the driver of the first vehicle was not seat belted. He died of his injuries at the scene. Mr. Konetski was seat belted and his air bag deployed. Mr. Konetski was obviously sore from the massive collision but had no visible signs of injury. Mr. Konetski's use of a seat belt saved him from extensive injuries or possible death.

At the conclusion of 2008, all 1,360 reportable crashes within Hanover County were reviewed by Sheriff's Office personnel. The crash involving Jon Konetski was selected for nomination to the Virginia *Saved By the Belt* Recognition Program, sponsored by the Virginia Association of Chiefs of Police; Virginia Department of Motor Vehicles; Virginia Department of State Police; Virginia Sheriff's Association; and DRIVE SMART Virginia.

During 2008, the Hanover County Sheriff's Office also received two awards pertaining to occupant protection from the Virginia Click-It-Or-Ticket program: Most Improved Seat Belt Use and Highest Seat Belt Use.

The Hanover County Sheriff's Office has increased enforcement efforts and participation in the state's Click-It-or-Ticket Program. Over the past two years, there has been a 136% increase in seat belt enforcement, a 90% reduction in traffic fatalities involving the lack of occupant protection devices as a contributing factor, and an 11% increase in overall seat belt use by the motoring public within Hanover County.



Presentation of the Saved by the Belt Award (left to right) Captain Thomas M. Woody, Sergeant Drew E. Darby, DMV Law Enforcement Liaisons Frank Kowaleski and Butch Letteer, Deputy Robert Stevens, Lt. Colonel David R. Hines, and recipient Jon M. Konetski

## **Purpose of Saved By the Belt & Bag Recognition Program**

- ✓ Identify individuals whose lives are saved or injuries significantly reduced because they were properly wearing a safety belt or were in a safety seat or protected by an air bag and a safety belt at the time of the crash.
- ✓ Provide documented evidence of cases where safety belts and other occupant protection devices "made the difference."
- ✓ Reinforce the life-saving importance of occupant protection for individuals involved in motor vehicle crashes and encourage others to utilize them.
- ✓ Increase public awareness on the benefits of proper use of safety belts/air bags and/or child safety seats.

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