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March 9, 2009

Re: Gwinnett Teen Victim Impact Panel and It Won't Happen To Me

Car crashes are the number one cause of teen deaths. The majority of these fatal crashes are due to inexperience, speed, inattention, or distraction. In June of 2006, the Gwinnett Solicitor's Office in partnership with It Won't Happen to Me began a Teen Victim Impact Panel (TVIP) to prevent teen traffic fatalities and serious injuries in Gwinnett. TVIP is specifically designed for young drivers aged 17 to 21 who have committed moving violations such as speeding, following too close, failure to yield, racing, or reckless driving. The program includes a panel of teen drivers who have survived a fatal crash or parents who have lost a teen to a fatal crash. These real life stories can have a strong impact on young traffic violators and their future driving behavior. We make this program available to Gwinnett judges (including city courts) to use as a sentencing option for young traffic violators. Average attendance is approximately 120-150 each month and since the program began in 2006, we have seen a dramatic reduction in teen traffic fatalities in Gwinnett from 14 to 2 last year.

This program has proven to be an important and effective resource in Gwinnett. I wanted to share our success with you all. If you are interested in bringing this program to your county, I invite you to come have a look. The TVIP meets at the GJAC auditorium on the 3rd Monday of each month (except November). It runs for 1.5 hours beginning at 7:00 pm with registration starting at 6:30 pm. Certificates of attendance are given at the end for verification. Visit the web site [www.itwonthappentome.org](http://www.itwonthappentome.org) to learn more and feel free to contact me or Bill Richardson if you have any questions.

*Rosanna M. Szabo*

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Gwinnett Solicitor-General