

WORD ON THE STREET

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BIG NEWS!

Law Enforcement Officers Tighten Grip on Auto Theft



Each year, the Authority encourages Pennsylvania drivers to protect their vehicles from theft. Our public awareness and educational programs are designed to empower vehicle owners to reduce their risk of becoming a victim, take steps to secure their vehicle and learn that auto theft prevention begins with common sense. While we provide “50 tips to protect your car” on our website, www.watchyourcar.org, we often promote the most important prevention tip—always “Lock your car and take your keys.”

In 2007, we cultivated a partnership with the Philadelphia Eagles. Together, we launched a public awareness campaign called the Stars and Cars Sweepstakes. The campaign targeted the southeast region of Pennsylvania where more than 40 percent of the state’s auto thefts occur. While the theft rate has

decreased, the same proportion of thefts is still occurring in and around Philadelphia. As a result, we felt it was important to engage drivers there once again. In September, with the help of the Philadelphia Eagles, we launched the Lock, Block & Win Sweepstakes.

The educational campaign gave fans the opportunity to enter every day for chances to win Eagles season tickets for the 2009 season, LoJack stolen vehicle recovery systems and great Eagles prizes. Like the Stars and Cars Sweepstakes, Lock, Block & Win was an online initiative supported by Internet and in-stadium advertising, as well as public relations efforts. Contestants answered Eagles and auto theft prevention trivia questions, learned how to protect their vehicles and invited friends to participate.

Pennsylvania drivers are not the only ones who need to protect their vehicles. This year, we have observed an increase in the number of thefts from vehicle dealerships. In fact, an Authority grantee reported that one thief, acting alone, stole over \$1.1 million worth of vehicles from dealerships. In response, we worked with the Automobile Dealers Association of Greater Philadelphia to educate dealership owners and managers about their risk. Through meetings and a dealership-targeted article, we discussed surveillance, key safety and inventory issues, providing dealerships with the information they need to prevent vehicle thefts.

To further work towards our prevention goals, the Authority continues to refine and distribute in-school driver education materials. We provide an educational DVD and lesson plan, free-of-charge, to all driver education programs across the state.

Also, the Authority funds two public outreach grantees that are integrated in the community and work to prevent thefts on a grassroots level.

Good Shepherd Mediation Program The Good Shepherd Mediation Program received its first grant in 2004. Currently, it is funded through June 2010 with a grant of \$96,928. After solidifying a partnership with the Philadelphia District Attorney’s Juvenile Court Division, the program has successfully developed and implemented a diversion program for first-time juvenile offenders involved in vehicle theft. In 2008, it worked intensively with 89 first-time juvenile offenders in order to reduce the likelihood that they would commit future delinquent acts. Of the juvenile offenders who completed the program in 2008, 89% have not been re-arrested. Through the program, Good Shepherd has issued more than 600 hours of community service. The organization continually facilitates an in-school theft prevention seminar targeted toward at-risk youth in Philadelphia.

Pennsylvania Anti-Car Theft Committee The Pennsylvania Anti-Car Theft Committee (PACT) received its first one-year grant in 1997 and is currently working under a two-year grant totaling \$93,500 through June 2009. PACT operates a speakers bureau designed to educate civic organizations and community groups.