

**Robeson County Health Department stands behind expanded National Crackdown on Drivers who don't buckle up children**

Lumberton, NC --- Robeson County Public Health Department today announced its official support of a national mobilization this Thanksgiving holiday to protect children by stepping up enforcement of child passenger safety laws. More than 5,000 law enforcement agencies across the nation are conducting the second 1998 wave of the Operation ABC Mobilization: America Buckles Up Children - the largest ever coordinated crackdown on drivers who don't buckle up children. The County Health Department joins over 1,000 organizations nationwide that endorse the intensive, 50-state lifesaving enforcement effort.

"Ten of thousands of law enforcement officers in all 50 states will be out in force protecting children from the greatest danger they face- being

unrestrained in a crash," said Janet Dewey, Executive Director of the Air Bag & Seat Belt Safety Campaign, sponsor of the Operation ABC Mobilization. "We know these officers are energized by the ground swell of support from organizations across the country like your county's Public Health Department.

"Although only law enforcement officers can write the tickets, we stand firmly behind the lifesaving message each ticket delivers," said William Smith, Robeson County Public Health Director. "The Health Department is not only a health provider, we're parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles who want to protect our children. The Operation ABC Mobilization is the kind of broad community-based movement our nation needs to save children's lives."

The Thanksgiving Operation ABC Mobilization comes on the heels of an extremely successful Mobilization last Memorial Day. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's

observational surveys before and after the last May Mobilization showed six million more people buckling up. This translates into an estimated 670 lives saved each year if these people continue to use their seat belts. In addition, a survey by the National Safety Council showed fatalities went down by more than 35 percent during the mobilization/Memorial Day period.

"The impact of the last Operation ABC Mobilization clearly illustrates that high-visibility enforcement works," said Mr. Smith. "That is why the Robeson County Public Health Department gives its official Endorsement for Enforcement. We hope officers can expand the Mobilization's success and, once again, save lives with a clear message to America: The law requires that children be buckled up at all times. No exceptions. No excuses."

Crashes are the leading cause of death to American children. Last year alone, more than 218 children were

killed in crashes in North Carolina, and six of those children died on Robeson County roads. Robeson County Public Health Department is active in child passenger safety. "Last month, we conducted a car seat safety inspection clinic in collaboration with the DMV and Jerry Johnson Chevrolet Dealership. More are planned," reports Linda Hughes, Child Injury Prevention Coordinator at Robeson County Health Department.

Studies consistently show that the best way to get children buckled up is to get adults buckled up. According to observational data, when a driver buckles up, children are buckled up 87 percent of the time; however, when a driver is unbuckled, child belt use drops to only 24 percent. A recent study by the University of California, Irvine, reported in the journal Pediatrics found, "Driver restraint use was the strongest predictor of child restraint use...a restrained driver was three times more likely to restrain a child." That is why, increasingly, officers are strengthening enforcement of adult belt laws during operation Operation ABC Mobilization.

Many drivers just don't believe they'll be in a crash, so they don't put on their own seat belt or make sure that children are restrained. The possibility of being stopped and ticketed is what it takes for many drivers to protect children by always buckling them up.

A survey of parents who have infants shows that the lack of adult belt use particularly endangers babies: parents who don't buckle up are more likely to improperly place babies in the front seat, leaving them at serious risk of being injured or killed by an air bag. According to investigations, almost all of the children who have died from air bag related injuries were completely unrestrained, improperly restrained or were infants riding in a rear-facing seat.

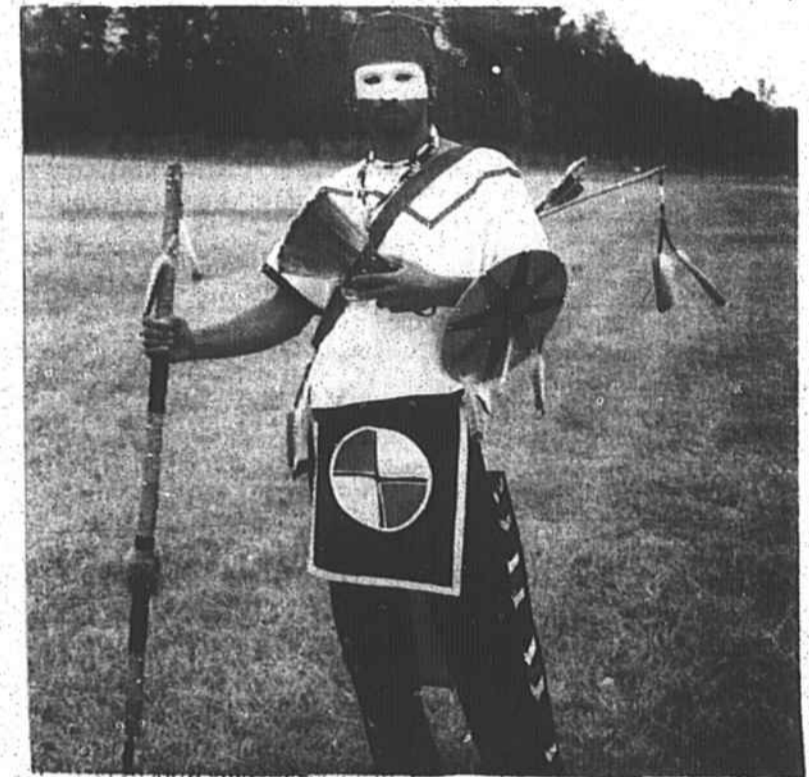
"In addition to getting kids buckled up, we must get the word out to parents that all children 12 and under belong properly buckled up in the back seat- especially in a vehicle equipped with air bags," said Dewey. The Mobilization also seeks to reach part-time seat belt users. "Some people believe they secure their children, but they don't actually buckle them up on every trip particularly the short trips," Dewey added. "Most crashes happen within a few miles from home. That's why it's so important to secure everyone in the vehicle every time and on every trip."

As part of their enforcement activities throughout the Operation ABC Mobilization, officers will distribute information on airbags safety and the importance of making sure children 12 and under ride properly buckled up in the back seat.

**Scenes from Hoke County Pow Wow**



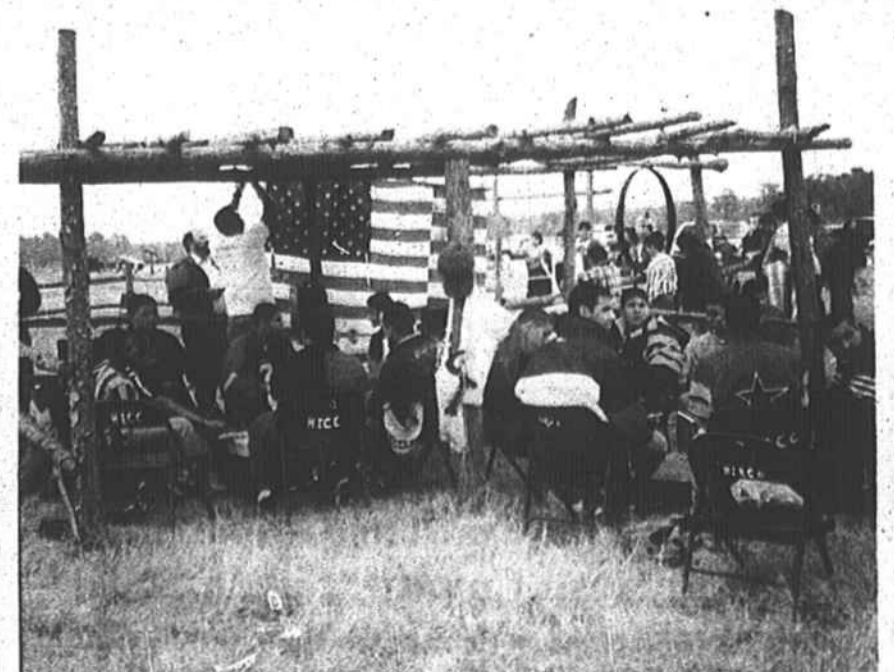
"Fortitude" Kateland Locklear/Jingle dress 365 pieces for each day of the year



Osceolo Mullin, Lumbee Male Dancer



Marcus White, Lumbee Male Dancer



Left, Young Drum, Tuscarora; Right-Red Snake/Lumbee



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