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CONTACT: Kim Tassie
248.342.4200 x 243
ktassie@baileypr.com

H.E.A.T. CELEBRATES 25 YEARS OF AUTO THEFT AWARENESS AND PREVENTION IN MICHIGAN

*H.E.A.T. tips have led to recovery of more than \$50 million in stolen property
and arrests of more than 3,300 suspects involved in auto theft-related crimes*

LIVONIA, Mich. (Jan. 5, 2010) – Since its inception in 1985, Help Eliminate Auto Thefts (H.E.A.T.) has been working diligently to keep Michigan residents and communities safe from the dangers of auto-theft related crimes.

H.E.A.T. – celebrating its 25th year in 2010 – is Michigan's statewide auto theft prevention program. H.E.A.T. coordinates citizen action with law enforcement agencies through a confidential, 24/7, toll-free tip line (1-800-242-HEAT) and Web site (www.1800242HEAT.com) for reporting information on stolen vehicles, chop shops and suspected auto theft activities including insurance fraud, identity theft and carjackings.

To date, H.E.A.T. has managed more than 8,500 tip calls, which have to lead to the recovery of more than 4,200 vehicles valued at upwards of \$51 million. As a result, nearly 3,400 suspects have been arrested and more than 2,000 tipsters have been awarded approximately \$3.5 million.

“I can’t tell you how proud I am to see the H.E.A.T. program reach this important milestone,” said Terri Miller, H.E.A.T. Director, who has been with the organization since 1999. “With each passing year, I am more confident that the H.E.A.T. program is an integral part of keeping Michigan communities and residents safe from the costs and dangers associated with auto-theft related crime. I hope we’re here for another quarter century and beyond.”

In the 1980s, states and regions experiencing high rates of auto thefts began to form Anti-Car Theft (ACT) groups. The groups, funded by voluntary grants from coalitions of law enforcement agencies, state funds, insurers and consumers, promoted public awareness of vehicle theft and lobbied for the passage of state legislation aimed at combating thefts. In 1985, Michigan auto insurers formed H.E.A.T., a statewide tip reward program designed to encourage community participation and cooperation with law enforcement agencies to reduce auto theft and auto-theft related activities. A first of its kind in the nation, H.E.A.T. continues to be a leader in the fight against auto theft. A testament to H.E.A.T.’s success, states such as Texas and Virginia have since modeled their auto-theft prevention organizations after Michigan H.E.A.T.’s program.

“For the past 25 years H.E.A.T. has been an invaluable resource in reducing auto theft-related crimes in Michigan,” said Oakland County Sheriff Mike Bouchard. “Our partnership with H.E.A.T. has been extremely successful, reducing auto theft in Oakland County by more than 65 percent since 1985. We are grateful for H.E.A.T.’s assistance in keeping Michigan communities safe and look forward to working together for another 25 years.”

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The H.E.A.T. program is funded through and administered by the Michigan Automobile Insurance Placement Facility, an association of Michigan automobile insurers.

About H.E.A.T.

H.E.A.T. works with Michigan law enforcement agencies to follow-up on tips. Tipsters are awarded up to \$1,000 if the tip leads to the arrest and prosecution of a suspected car thief or a person suspected of auto theft-related insurance fraud. Rewards of up to \$10,000 are issued if a tip results in the arrest and binding over for trial of a suspected theft ring or chop shop operators. H.E.A.T. rewards up to \$2,000 for information leading to the issuance of a warrant for a carjacking suspect.

The H.E.A.T. tip line is monitored by the Michigan State Police and funded by Michigan's auto insurance companies.

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***Editor's Note: To schedule an interview with Terri Miller,
contact Kim Tassie at 248.342.4200 x 243 or ktassie@baileypr.com.***