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Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT): *Focus on Distraction* Gala Raises Awareness of Road Safety

WASHINGTON (June 10, 2015) – The Association for Safe International Road Travel (ASIRT), honored champions dedicated to global road safety at its annual gala at the Sphinx Club in Washington, DC on June 9. The evening’s theme was “Focus on Distraction.”

“Inadequate laws, irresponsible driver behaviors and poor enforcement continue to shatter dreams and destroy lives,” said Rochelle Sobel, who founded ASIRT in 1995 following the death of her son, Aron Sobel, and 22 other passengers from a bus crash in Turkey.

Each day in the United States, more than nine people are killed and more than 1,153 are injured in crashes that reportedly involve a distracted driver, according to the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration. Young drivers are particularly at risk, accounting for 27 percent of distracted drivers in fatal crashes, reports NHTSA.

“Distracted driving contributes to far too many road fatality and injuries in the US and around the world, each year. We all recognize that driving safely is challenging enough when a driver is paying attention to the road,” Sobel added. “Distracted drivers and distracted pedestrians place themselves and those around them at risk. A single text, a single email, a single call, a single photo can end a lifetime of hopes and dreams.”

As part of this year’s gala reception, ASIRT recognized the following road safety champions in the U.S. government and the non-profit and private sector:

- **BP p.l.c.**, acceptance by Marcelo Panelo, Senior Director of U.S. Regulatory Affairs– Safety & Health, *Global Corporate Conscience Award*
- **Bella Dinh-Zarr**, Vice Chairman, National Transportation Safety Board and Former US Director, FIA Foundation, *ASIRT Road Safety Champion Award*
- **DCH Auto Group Charitable Foundation**, acceptance by Roy Bavaro, Executive Director, DCH Auto Group Charitable Foundation, *ASIRT Industry Safety Leadership Award*
- **Julie F. Rosenbaum Skolnick**, *Aron Sobel Guardian Award*

The evening program featured several stations with interactive activities that focused on aspects of road distraction, including a driving simulator, a distracted driving quiz and a pledge station for guests to have a photo taken while signing pledges to be safe, distracted-free pedestrians, drivers and cyclists.

In addition, Jeffrey Michael, Associate Administrator for Research and Program Development at NHTSA, discussed findings presented at a recent symposium on cognitive distraction and how it affects drivers.

The more than 100 guests in attendance included members of the diplomatic community, government and non-governmental road safety organizations and agencies, national and international road safety experts, corporations involved in road safety and ASIRT supporters.

For more information about ASIRT, visit www.asirt.org.

About ASIRT

ASIRT was founded in 1995 to promote global road safety through advocacy, education and the creation of model, sustainable road safety programs and partnerships worldwide. ASIRT supports the UN Decade of Action goal of preventing 5 million deaths from 2011-2020.

ASIRT publishes comprehensive Road Travel Reports, highly detailed and useful publications for individuals, students and corporations that describe road risks, road culture and driver preparedness for more than 150 countries. For more information, visit www.asirt.org.