

The Texas Municipal Courts Education Center's (TMCEC) Municipal Traffic Safety Initiatives grant, funded by the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT), recently sponsored the traffic safety awards to recognize those municipal courts that have demonstrated outstanding contributions to traffic safety and eliminating impaired driving in their respective communities. The awards are a way for municipalities to increase awareness through traffic safety activities. All municipal courts in the State of Texas were eligible to apply. Applicants were judged on their activities related to increasing traffic safety while preventing impaired driving, traffic crashes, traffic fatalities, juvenile DUI, child safety seat offenses, red light running, and other traffic-related offenses. Twenty-five courts received awards this year: nine low volume (serving fewer than 30,000 people), seven medium volume (serving 30,000 to 149,999 people), four high volume (serving 150,000+ people), and four new applicants and one for the Trailblazer Award.

Bay City Municipal Court was given one of the 9 awards for low volume courts based on our efforts to bring traffic safety knowledge to our community. Our very own Warrant Officer, Tomasita Tabares, represented Bay City Municipal Court at local high schools during their annual health fairs. She brought the "alcohol impairment goggles" to these events and gave students and parents the opportunity to try them on while completing simple tasks so they understood how being impaired can effect your ability to drive. Officer Tabares educated students and parents on the dangers of drinking and driving.

On Oct. 3rd, Bay City Municipal Court joined the National Night Out Kick Off festivities at Bay City Public Library where we had a display table, games and free materials for the kids at the event. Participants thoroughly enjoyed our impaired ring toss game where they were asked to put on the alcohol impairment goggles and attempt to the throw an inflatable ring on an inflatable goal post worn by a member of court staff.

Bay City Municipal Court also visited area schools as part of Municipal Courts Week in November. We visited Van Vleck Elementary School, Holy Cross Catholic School, Cherry Elementary School and Linnie Roberts Elementary School, reaching a total of 1,269 students. Juvenile Case Manager, Ginger Iovanna, assisted by Court Clerk Lillie Norris along with Officer Tabares completed several assemblies on car seat safety by reading to the students and demonstrating the proper height and age requirements for booster/seat belt placement. Staff also allowed the participating students to wear the alcohol impairment goggles and shared important traffic safety information from the endthestreak campaign regarding the number of accidents on Texas highways each year. These students were also given the option to enter our coloring contest. The coloring page from the "Tex and Dot" activity book depicted an important traffic safety image for the kids to color and submit for a chance to win the prize of "lunch with the judge" (a pizza party lunch hosted by Judge Thompson & Judge Suzanne Sullivan) of which there were over 500 entries.

Bay City Municipal Court staff is and has been dedicated to outreach in our community and we are extremely proud of our efforts and are excited for what we have planned for the future to bring more knowledge and awareness of important traffic safety information to our citizens.