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NEWS RELEASE

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Three School Bus Drivers Receive Top Safety Awards

Santa Fe, NM – Three of New Mexico's safest school bus drivers were honored last month at the annual New Mexico School Bus Driver Safety Competition, or ROAD-E-O, in Albuquerque.

First place was awarded to Athena Kingery of Rio Rancho Public Schools, second place went to Raynell Harrison from Gallup McKinley County Schools, and third place went to Vickie Thompson from Los Lunas Public Schools. Ms. Kingery will represent the New Mexico at the School Bus Driver International Safety Competition, to be held in St. Louis, MO on July 24-25, 2010.

"New Mexico school bus drivers perform a critical public service by transporting our children safely to school," Secretary of Education Designate Dr. Susanna M. Murphy said. "I'm proud to highlight the importance of their work."

The drivers at the contest had either won local school district safety competitions or were selected by districts to attend. The event began with a written test, followed by the driving competition and then the award ceremony. The driving competition was completed in a 71 passenger conventional school bus. The drivers had to demonstrate their skills at such tasks as maneuvering through diminishing clearance obstacles, parallel parking, controlled right turns, backing up, student stops and safe railroad crossings procedures.

"School bus drivers are unsung heroes in New Mexico public schools," said Carlos M. Santiago of the Public Education Department's School Transportation Bureau. "The ROAD-E-O offers New Mexico school bus drivers the opportunity to receive the recognition they deserve."

The School Bus Driver Safety Competition offers parents, students and others a way to view the driving skills of New Mexico's school bus drivers. The event is sponsored by the New Mexico School Bus Safety Program, a group of volunteers from school districts, bus companies and the Public Education Department.

Facts about school bus travel in the 2009-2010 school year include:

The number of students who traveled by school bus daily: 179,831

Number of miles traveled: 32.3 million

Number of school buses in the state: 2,224

For more information, go to www.nmsbsp.org. or call Carlos Santiago at 505-827-6643.

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