

## **HELP ELIMINATE AUTO THEFTS CELEBRATES 16<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY; LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE IN MICHIGAN'S AUTO THEFT TRENDS**

**LIVONIA, MI (22 October 2001)** – The nation's first auto theft prevention program, HEAT<sup>®</sup> (Help Eliminate Auto Thefts) is celebrating its 16<sup>th</sup> anniversary of fighting auto theft in Michigan, and pledging its commitment to continue battling this crime. Michigan's auto theft rates have dropped 25% since HEAT<sup>®</sup>'s inception in 1985, but the state still ranks in the top five in the country for auto theft. This year, in an effort to anticipate trends for the future, HEAT<sup>®</sup> co-hosted Michigan's first ever Auto Theft Forum, as well as releasing a cutting-edge public service announcement to reach potential informants and a new law enforcement training video to assist police officers in investigations.

Auto Theft Forum 2001, co-hosted by HEAT<sup>®</sup> and the Auto Theft Prevention Authority (ATPA), was a groundbreaking step for the future of auto theft prevention. Attended by experts from law enforcement, the insurance industry and automobile manufacturers and dealers, as well as prosecuting attorneys and state legislators, the forum focused directly on the problem of auto theft in Michigan and delivered some important conclusions. Most importantly, that the profile of a typical auto crime and thief is changing dramatically.

"Auto theft is evolving, becoming more difficult and costly to detect and prevent, as a growing percentage of theft investigations involve fraud. More people are committing insurance fraud and thieves are using false identifications to take cars right off dealership lots," said Terri Miller, Director of HEAT<sup>®</sup>. "The Auto Theft Forum allowed for statewide auto theft experts to come together to discuss these trends, and HEAT<sup>®</sup> is looking forward to using this knowledge to our advantage, as we continue to combat this crime throughout Michigan with community outreach, training and our confidential tip-reward line, 1-800-242-HEAT."

HEAT<sup>®</sup> also released two new video productions designed to reach targeted markets that can help catch car thieves. HEAT<sup>®</sup>'s new fast-paced PSA entitled "Everyday" was created specifically to reach potential informants and is currently being aired across the state on

television and radio stations. The Roll Call Training Video, teaching police how HEAT® can help them obtain information and resources in the fight against auto theft, is available to all Michigan law enforcement officers and departments.

HEAT® will be celebrating its 16<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in style, with a breakfast at the Tiger Club at Comerica Park in Detroit. Wayne County Prosecutor, Mike Duggan, will serve as keynote speaker at the event, being held at 8:30 am on Tuesday, October 23. Four Investigative Units of the Year will be honored, including the Michigan State Police Downriver Auto Theft Team, the Michigan State Police Western Wayne Auto Theft Unit, the Grand Rapids Combined Auto Theft Team and the City of Wayne Police Department, for their work this year in auto theft investigations.

Since its inception in 1985, HEAT® has awarded more than \$2.3 million to tip callers to its confidential tip reward line, 1-800-242-HEAT. During that period, HEAT® tips have led to 2,459 arrests of auto theft suspects and the recovery of 3,012 vehicles, valued at more than \$34.8 million.

Tipsters that call the HEAT® tip line are rewarded up to \$1,000 if their tip leads to the arrest and prosecution of a suspected car thief. Up to \$10,000 is rewarded if the tip results in the arrest and binding over for trial of suspected theft ring members and/or chop shop operators. HEAT® also rewards \$2,000 for information leading to the issuance of a warrant for a carjacking suspect.

The auto theft prevention program offers rewards to citizens with reliable information regarding auto theft, auto theft related insurance fraud and carjacking. HEAT® contends that by encouraging and rewarding citizen involvement, Michigan citizens play a role in their own safety and work together with law enforcement to combat this crime. HEAT®'s hotline (1-800-242-HEAT) is monitored by the Michigan State Police and funded by Michigan auto insurance companies.

**Editor's note: This event will be attended by members of Michigan's law enforcement community, insurance industry and government officials. It is not open to the public.**

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