

Hazleton Area Student's Video Wins \$10K for School

By Kent Jackson - Staff Writer - Standard-Speaker
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Megan Kernis says she isn't a social media influencer, but she portrays one in a short video about distracted driving.

She smiles and touches her hair, takes selfies from different angles while snacking and displays a dog lit up, literally, like a Christmas tree by a string of bulbs.

"Even Megan knows when to put her phone down, because she's aware of the dangers of distracted driving," she says in the voiceover.

"Be like Megan. Don't text. Don't post. Just drive."



In this screenshot from Hazleton Area's Megan Kernis' PSA video on distracted driving, Kernis gets in her car saying that isn't the time to use a cellphone - Kent Jackson / Staff Photo

Her video lasts 30 seconds and won \$10,000 for Hazleton Area High School, where she is club president of Students Against Destructive Decisions.

NJM Insurance Group awarded Megan's public service announcement second prize in its annual video contest about safe driving.

The company received 106 entries from schools in Pennsylvania and New Jersey and posted the winners last week.



In this screenshot from Hazleton Area's Megan Kernis' PSA video on distracted driving, Kernis demonstrates the right place to take selfies is on your couch, not in a car. - Kent Jackson / Staff Photo

"I can't hide it. I definitely was screaming. My mom and I definitely were freaking out celebrating," Megan said.

Her school's SADD Club can use the prize money for activities such as a safe party for graduates or programs about safe driving.

"Even if we don't use the money this year, I'm sure we can set it aside for future classes," Megan said.

She enjoys creating videos. Last year, she drew thousands of frames on an iPad to animate an entry in a science video contest.

While Megan would like to become a doctor, for now she plans to keep promoting public health through the SADD Club at her school, where she is a sophomore.

"I think it would be really important for the club to focus on mental health next year," said Megan, thinking of the effect that the pandemic had on students.

Because of the pandemic, she shot the video for her SADD Club alone. Her friend's big brown dog, named Turtle, makes a cameo appearance, in tree lights.

To get ideas, Megan looked at videos from other years.

"I like those that were in more of an upbeat manner," she said. "I was taking on a persona. While I am not a social media influencer, it gets the message across. Teenagers look up to different influencers."