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Metro area motorist patrol receives Governor's points of light award for volunteer service on the roadways

Lincoln, Neb. – Nicknamed “Highway Angels” by grateful motorists, volunteers associated with the Omaha metro area motorist assist program (MAMAP) patrol the busiest sections of the roadway system during the morning and evening rush-hour periods. They provide free service to motorists who are stranded with disabled vehicles. Services include delivering fuel and needed fluids, changing flat tires, conducting jump starts, and making arrangements for tow service. During some welfare checks, when they noticed a person sitting in a vehicle alongside the roadway, they found it necessary to request immediate medical emergency assistance.

Governor Heineman recognized the volunteer based service patrol on May 14, 2014 with the Governor's Points of Light group award at a ceremony in the Warner Chamber at the State Capitol. The awards are sponsored by ServeNebraska and are presented quarterly in recognition of volunteers who give their time, talent and energy to help Nebraskans build stronger communities.

The Metro Area Motorists Assist Program was launched in 1997. Since that time, the volunteers have completed more than 80,000 assists. Many recipients of this “goodwill” program were grateful out-of-state travelers who were extremely appreciative of the friendly and courteous service they received in Nebraska. The MAMAP has been so successful that similar initiatives were created for motorists in the Lincoln and Grand Island areas.

The Interstate-80 corridor through Omaha is one of the nation's busiest freight corridors and is a strategic transportation asset where unnecessary delay is costly. One section of I-80 in Omaha carries more than 175,000 cars and trucks each day and has been listed as one of the country's worst 100 freight bottlenecks. Motorist assist services help to mitigate delay along the busy corridor. The patrol service area includes both Nebraska and Iowa. Routes run on I-80 from Madison Avenue in Council Bluffs to the Platte River west of Omaha.

According to Jim McGee, Nebraska Department of Roads, “The Omaha patrol can be credited with reducing secondary freeway crashes and a significant staff savings to law enforcement and highway department staff. Patrol volunteers have saved agencies the equivalent of two full-time staff yearly for 15 years while providing more than \$2 million in motorist services annually. Other benefits include reduced tailpipe emissions resulting from congestion, reduced fuel use and improved system reliability.”

To ensure the program's continued success, community partners provide funding and in-kind contributions to obtain vehicles, communication equipment, uniforms for the volunteers, and tools and supplies. Program partners include the Nebraska State Patrol, the Metro Area Planning Agency, the Nebraska Department of Roads, AAA, Lee Sapp Sr., the Iowa Department of Roads, the City of Omaha, and the National Safety Council.

Greg Youell, Executive Director for the Metropolitan Area Planning Agency (MAPA) said, “The volunteers literally risk their lives to provide assistance to motorists in need and provide a great service to the community.”

The Nebraska State Patrol provides leadership to administer this program. The Patrol is extremely grateful to the dozens of hard working and dedicated volunteer ambassadors who commit their time and expertise serving motorists traveling the Interstate system.

To nominate individuals and groups for the Governor's Points of Light Awards who have made a difference through volunteerism and service, visit the ServeNebraska website at www.serve.nebraska.gov. The next nomination deadline is June 15, 2014.

ServeNebraska pursues its mission of mobilizing Nebraskans to strengthen their communities through volunteering, collaboration and national service programs.

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