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NEWS – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: Thursday, November 1, 2018
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FRIDAY NIGHT LIVE YOUTH TALLY DISTRACTED DRIVING IN EIGHTH ANNUAL TRAFFIC-SAFETY ASSESSMENT

Early in the morning on Tuesday, October 16, teenagers across California spent an hour tallying distracted driving outside their schools, during the eighth-annual Roadwatch assessment an activity organized by the California Friday Night Live Partnership (CFNLP). Friday Night Live (FNL) members compiled data on the number of drivers whose attention was occupied by something other than driving. They noted drivers were distracted by devices, passengers, pets, food, and more. Results of the Roadwatch assessment showed an increase in the average amount of distracted driving instances per intersection, since 2017. With 11,352 total distractions observed state-wide, in the span of an hour, on average 139 distracted drivers drove past California schools on Tuesday morning.

Traffic accidents remain the number one killer of young people ages 15-24 in America. Students who participated in the Roadwatch assessment project compiled statistics to help fight for safer roadways. "This assessment activity alone will not be what changes the community," Lynne Goodwin, Program Director of the California Friday Night Live Partnership, said. "The actions that FNL participants take because of this activity is where we will see real change occur."

For Teen Driver Safety Week, October 21-27, FNL chapters in 32 California counties surveyed 82 intersections near high schools and middle schools from seven to eight a.m. They witnessed distractions ranging from hand-held cellphones to kissing, eating with utensils, and using a tablet or laptop. In Solano County, FNL students from Benicia, Fairfield, and Vanden High Schools participated in this year's Roadwatch. Collectively the students observed 2,127 cars pass through intersections around their schools. The most distracted driving practice was the use of a hand-held device (122 drivers) followed by personal grooming, eating/drinking, and listening to very loud music. Vanden FNL students noted that about half of all drivers they observed were driving distracted, feeling they witnessed more adult than student distracted drivers.

Josh Hathaway, a senior at Benicia High School participated in his third Roadwatch, "I can say it was a success. Everyone that was involved did their part in looking out for what people were being distracted by, and we got back positive results, in that we had less distracted drivers than previous years. We had the usual, like texting and eating/drinking, but we also had a people smoking and taking care of animals, which was new to us. I am proud of my chapter for putting in the effort to help make a difference."

Solano County Superintendent of Schools Lisette Estrella-Henderson applauds the students on their effort to highlight distracted driving near their schools. "We want to thank FNL students for their commendable civic responsibility and contribution to understanding the problem of distracted driving. They collected real time data illustrating a great concern, especially for our student populated areas. This is a good reminder to parents and students driving to and from school to be aware of their surroundings because all accidents caused by distracted driving are preventable."



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Vanden High School has received a grant from the Office of Traffic Safety to work on education and a campaign focusing on dangerous and drunk driving in their community. Johanna Nowak-Palmer, Solano Friday Night Live Coordinator says, "The data FNL students collected this week will really set the foundation for their work towards creating safer drivers in their community. Unsafe and distracted driving has affected their communities greatly and seeing so many people practice unsafe driving where students walk, bike, and drive is a real eye opener for many of our students participating in Roadwatch each year." Vanden FNL will be hosting a series of town hall meetings later this school year to share their work and educate their community.

Active in 50 counties statewide, the CFNLP engages young people to become active leaders and resources in their communities. For more information about Friday Night Live, visit www.fridaynightlive.org or contact Johanna Nowak-Palmer at 707-646-7601.

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