



Lisette Estrella-Henderson, Superintendent of Schools
5100 Business Center Drive, Fairfield, CA 94534-1658
707.399.4400 ★ www.solanocoe.net

NEWS – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Organization: Solano County Office of Education
Contact: Johanna Nowak-Palmer, Program Manager of Youth Development
Telephone: 707-646-7608
E-Mail: jnowak@solanocoe.net

Solano Youth Coalition Members Address State Assembly *Local students advocate for Friday Night Live Program*

Monday, May 7, 2018, Solano County Office of Education Youth Development Department took three student representatives to Sacramento to address the State Assembly's Budget Subcommittee. The youth group spoke about the importance of the Friday Night Live (FNL) program, work they provide to their communities, the state, and why the Subcommittee should increase FNL program funding.

Solano County has FNL Chapters at Armijo, Fairfield, Jesse Bethel, and Vanden High Schools (in the Fairfield-Suisun, Vallejo City, and Travis Unified School Districts respectively); with student representatives throughout the county serving on the Solano Youth Coalition (SYC). "The Friday Night Live program provides Solano County youth with an opportunity to develop civic leadership skills that are significant for our community. This program is designed to challenge students to address issues that may potentially impact outcomes for citizens of Solano County," says Solano County Superintendent of Schools Lisette Estrella-Henderson.

The FNL program has expanded and grown over time. Focusing on youth development, students create FNL Chapters at their schools or in their communities. The mission of the program is how to build partnerships for positive and healthy youth development, engaging youth as active leaders, and valued as positive resources in their communities. The youth participating in FNL programs continue to address issues like underage drinking, distracted and impaired driving, and traffic safety. They also look to at a variety of concerns impacting youth today including: school climate, bullying, problem gambling, mental health, and teen dating violence.

On April 17, 2018, Assembly Member Devon J. Mathis submitted a request to the Subcommittee Chairman to consider increasing funding to the California Friday Night Live Partnership (CFNLP). In his letter Assemblyman Mathis stated, "Over the last ten years, since the down turn of the economy, the FNL programs at the state and local levels have seen dramatic reductions in funding, resulting in less capability to serve young people when the need continues to grow. One program that was decimated with elimination of funding was the Friday Night Live Mentoring (FNLM) program. The FNLM program is a cross-age mentoring program that connects high school students as positive role models for middle school students to prepare them for a successful transition to high school. Today the FNL program continues to operate in 50 of the 58 counties with just over 500 chapters."

Assemblyman Mathis went on to say, "While the program has been able to retain its original services, the benefits offered to the students should be expanded to their original levels. These programs have a proven track record of



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benefiting their participants, especially with regards to reducing abuse of alcohol, tobacco, drugs, and violence. This program helps young people stay in school, increasing school's average daily attendance and helps promote a safe school environment. As such, we should expand the capacity of the FNL system in the 50 counties by providing additional resources to support and enhance the quality of local program implementation."

The Solano County student representatives included: Tara Khanna, Jenny Aguiar, and Niko Fio. Ms. Khanna a Sophomore at Vanden High School in the Travis Unified School District was selected as a representative by both the Solano Youth Coalition (SYC) Advisors and California Youth Council (CYC) Advisors. Jenny Aguiar and Niko Fiso, are both graduated FNL members, who now serve as Student Advisors for SYC. "FNL is very important to me because not only did it connect me with likeminded youth, but it gave all of us a chance to create positive change in our community that mattered to us," Fiso stated. He credited FNL for having a positive impact on his life saying, "The organization has pushed me to do far greater things than I imagined at such a young age. I owe FNL a great deal to the person I am today and the person I aspire to be in the future."

For more information about Solano County's Friday Night Live programs, please contact, Johanna Nowak-Palmer at jnowak@solanocoe.net.

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