



NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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HOW SAFE ARE THE STREETS IN FRONT OF OUR SCHOOLS?

[Santa Cruz, Ca.] (11/21/2018)- Last month, marking National Teen Driver Safety week, teenagers across California tallied distracted driving outside their schools during the eighth-annual Roadwatch assessment, an activity organized by the California Friday Night Live Partnership (CFNLP). Active in 50 counties statewide, the CFNLP engages young people to become active leaders and resources in their communities.

Friday Night Live (FNL) members in 32 California counties surveyed 82 intersections near schools from seven to eight a.m., compiling data on drivers whose attention was occupied by something other than driving. Among the distractions observed, they noted drivers who were distracted by hand-held cellphones, kissing, eating with utensils, and using a tablet or laptop. With a total of 11,352 distractions observed state-wide in one-hour, an average of 139 distracted drivers drove past each California school that morning.

Here in Santa Cruz County, FNL members observed driving habits outside of 4 local schools- Shoreline Middle School, Lakeview Middle School, Soquel High School, and Branciforte Middle School. Data collected show that the most common distracted driving behaviors observed were the use of hand-held devices, eating or drinking while driving, and reaching for items. Distracted driving behaviors observed included a driver who was dunking food into coffee while driving without their hands on the steering wheel, and a driver who rolled through a 4-way stop in front of a school while reaching for a burrito, which the driver then began to eat while coasting through the intersection.

Youth noted that unfortunately, numbers for distracted driving are up in Santa Cruz County. Last year, youth found that 8.3% of the drivers they observed were distracted. This year, 25.8% of the 2,500+ drivers observed were driving distracted. In a recent meeting to discuss this data, over 50% of youth attending, personally knew another young person who had been injured or killed due to distracted driving behaviors.

Though Teen Driver Safety Week has ended, FNL chapters across the county will continue analyzing this data and working to address traffic safety issues in our community throughout the year, as traffic crashes remain the number one killer of young people ages 15-24 in America. "This assessment activity alone will not be what changes the community," Lynne Goodwin, Program Director of CFNLP, said. "The actions that FNL participants take because of this activity is where we will see real change occur."

Santa Cruz County Friday Night Live urges all members of our community to keep driving safety in mind all year long. Please be aware of the great risk that you inflict on yourself, your passengers, and the community when driving distracted. FNL members work to improve traffic safety in their local communities with funding provided by a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. The Roadwatch assessment is an engaging way to bring attention to distracted driving and to develop a meaningful commitment from the youth advocates involved.

For more information about Friday Night Live, www.visitfridaynightlive.org.

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