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ORANGE COUNTY STUDENT WINS STATEWIDE POSTER CONTEST

ORLANDO, Fla-- (February 7, 2013)—Cheney Elementary School fifth grader, Liana Ocampo, took statewide top honors in the 2012 WalkSafe poster contest as part of a school curriculum program fostering pedestrian safety among elementary students.

Introduced to Orange County Public Schools by *Best Foot Forward*, a community-wide pedestrian safety coalition, the three-day WalkSafe® curriculum includes one hour of classroom instruction, one hour of interactive practice during physical education, and one hour of conceptual learning through art class, with kids making posters to be entered in state and local competition. To date, 45 OCPS schools have downloaded curriculum from the WalkSafe® website.

The WalkSafe program impacts approximately 135,000 students and 5,000 adults each year through its comprehensive approach. Statewide, more than 200 students from 90 elementary schools submitted posters to the WalkSafe contest, as part of the in-school education program which also satisfies more than ten Next Generation Sunshine State Standards. To qualify, students must have completed the WalkSafe curriculum at their school, demonstrated a working knowledge of pedestrian safety, and submitted original artwork.

“We are thrilled to see the program expanding throughout the state,” said Carolina Gutierrez, PhD, Assistant Director of the WalkSafe/BikeSafe programs at the University of Miami’s Miller School of Medicine. “Keeping our children safe and healthy is an issue that affects everyone. We are excited to partner with *Best Foot Forward* in implementing the WalkSafe curriculum in Orange County. As we improve pediatric pedestrian safety, we can increase physical activity level through encouraging children to walk to and from school.”

Two other Orange County students won county-wide poster awards. Makeila Miranda-Lopes, a third grade student from Castle Creek Elementary School, won in the 2nd-3rd grade category. Danielle Cohn, a first grade student from Waterbridge Elementary School, won in the K-1st grade category. Thirteen Orange County Public Schools participated in the statewide contest as part of the WalkSafe Curriculum.

All three students will be recognized at the Feb. 12 Orange County School Board meeting. Their parents, teachers and principals have been invited to attend. The students will be presented with a WalkSafe certificate and awarded game tickets from the Orlando Magic, strong supporters in fostering pediatric pedestrian safety in Central Florida. In addition, statewide winner Liana will receive a Nook™ and her poster will be displayed on the WalkSafe website (www.walksafe.us). The winning posters will be framed and displayed at each child's school.

The Orange County WalkSafe poster contest winners will be honored at the Orange County School Board Meeting (445 W. Amelia St., Orlando, FL 32801) on Feb. 12 at 5:30 p.m.

About WalkSafe®

WalkSafe is a three-day elementary school curriculum that satisfies more than 10 Next Generation Sunshine State standards. Created in 2001 by Dr. Gillian Hotz, the program is based out of the University of Miami's Miller School of Medicine to teach students in kindergarten through grade 5 to safely walk to and from school. Since its inception, Miami-Dade County's pedestrian accident figures for elementary school aged children decreased by 68 percent. To learn more, visit www.walksafe.us.

About Best Foot Forward

Best Foot Forward for Pedestrian Safety is a coalition of civic leaders, public safety officials, engineers, educators, transportation planners, advocates and concerned citizens. Initiated by Bike/Walk Central Florida under the leadership of former Orange County Mayor Linda Chapin, spearheaded by Orlando Mayor Buddy Dyer, the coalition includes MetroPlan Orlando, Orange County Government, Orange County Public Schools, Orlando Health, Lynx, Winter Park Health Foundation, Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), Florida Bicycle Association, the City of Orlando, Winter Park, Maitland, Windermere, Winter Garden, Apopka and town of Eatonville, as well as police chiefs throughout Orange County led by Orlando Police Chief Paul Rooney and Orange County Sheriff Jerry Demings.

The mission is to reduce pedestrian injuries and deaths by 50 percent over five years, by improving pedestrian safety and encouraging walking as a safe, fun form of transportation and healthy activity. To learn more, go to www.iyield4peds.org.

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