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THREE ORANGE COUNTY STUDENTS WINNERS IN STATEWIDE PEDESTRIAN SAFETY POSTER CONTEST

ORLANDO, Fla—(March 5, 2014)—Three young students will be honored for their commitment to pedestrian safety as part of UM-WalkSafe’s annual statewide poster contest at the March 11, 2014, Orange County school board meeting. Nine elementary schools participated in this year’s poster contest and Lake George Elementary third grader, Kaitlyn Sheehan, and fourth grader, Jolina Jassal, along with Castle Creek Elementary Kindergartener Angelique Lugo are the Orange County winners. Jolina Jassal was named a runner-up at the state-wide level. The winning posters are posted on www.walksafe.us.

Pedestrian safety continues to be a hot button topic as the top four most dangerous metro regions in the US are in Florida, (Orlando, Tampa-St. Pete, Jacksonville, and Miami-Ft. Lauderdale), according to the 2012 “Dangerous by Design” study. *Best Foot Forward* for Pedestrian Safety was launched in 2012 to respond to this crisis in Central Florida by improving safety through enforcement, engineering and education. Orange County Public Schools (OCPS) is a founding coalition partner and offers the Sunshine State Standard WalkSafe curriculum as a resource to all elementary school teachers.

WalkSafe® was created by the University Of Miami Miller School Of Medicine and aims to decrease the number of children injured as pedestrians, increase physical activity, and encourage the use of walkable environments. It is a three-day curriculum that combines classroom instruction, interactive practice through physical education, and conceptual learning through art class culminating in submissions to the annual art contest.

Crash data from the Florida Department of Transportation has revealed that since the inception of the WalkSafe Program in 2001, there has been a 65% decrease in severe Child Pedestrians Hit By Car (PHBC) injuries in the Miami-Dade County region.

Gillian Hotz, PhD at University Of Miami Miller School Of Medicine WalkSafe Program Director offered appreciation for Orange County’s participation. “Thanks to the Orange County Public School District and their strong partnerships with *Best Foot Forward*, Healthy Central Florida, and the Walk “n” Roll

programs, we are working to decrease the number of children injured and ensuring lifelong safety skills!”

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 March 11 at 5:30 pm. The winners will be recognized at the meeting and will receive a \$60 Sketchers Gift Card, Sketchers magazine, WalkSafe t-shirt and WalkSafe gear such as a rain poncho, whistle, temporary tattoos, reflective items, and stickers. The winners will have their original posters framed for display at their schools.

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 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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