



Contact: Barbara Giles
Bike/Walk Central Florida
407.765.3017
Barbara@bikewalkcf.org
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 17, 2018

MEDIA ALERT/PHOTO OPP

Operation Best Foot Forward Begins in Osceola County

Osceola County Sheriff's Office, Kissimmee Police Department and St. Cloud Police Department to start ticketing drivers who fail to yield to people in crosswalks on April 18

WHAT: Osceola County Sheriff's Office (OCSO), Kissimmee Police Department (KPD) and St. Cloud Police Department (SCPD) will be teaming up to conduct its first high-visibility crosswalk enforcement action on Wednesday, April 18 at four marked crosswalks starting at 8:30 am.

Dubbed *Operation Best Foot Forward*, plain-clothed officers cross the street at a marked crosswalk. Drivers who fail to yield to people in marked crosswalks will be cited \$166 and three points on their driver's license [as Florida law requires](#). Since January, the three enforcement agencies have focused efforts on educating residents about the driver yield law before the April ticketing wave by handing out tip cards, participating at local events and issuing more than 165 warnings to local drivers.

WHY: The *Best Foot Forward* pedestrian safety program was launched in 2012 in Orange County and Osceola County in October 2017. It was in response to the alarming rate of driver versus pedestrian collisions evidenced by topping the list as the [most dangerous metro area](#) for people crossing the street. More than a pedestrian awareness campaign, *Best Foot Forward* is a behavior change program that focuses on getting drivers to stop for people using crosswalks, per Florida law. *Best Foot Forward* has proven to be effective, confirmed by the increase of driver yield rates in City of Orlando and Orange County. Specifically, the driver yield rates have increased from an average of 17% to an average of 60% on roads 35mph and lower.

Expecting the same result, Osceola County adopted the Best Foot Forward program in October 2017. The expansion into Osceola County aligns with the opening of the Kissimmee SunRail station mid-year, which authorities expect will bring more foot traffic to the downtown Kissimmee area. While the short-term goal is to increase drivers yielding to people in crosswalks, the long-term mission is to save lives by eliminating all pedestrian and driver collisions throughout Osceola County. To learn more about the expansion into the City of Kissimmee, St. Cloud and Osceola County, click [here](#).

WHEN: Wednesday, April 18. Media are invited to *Operation Best Foot Forward* and will have the opportunity to speak to drivers, police officers and people walking at the crosswalks noted below.

WHERE:

<u>Crosswalk</u>	<u>Approximate Start Time:</u>	<u>Agency enforcing</u>
W. Donegan Ave. & Coral Ave.	8:30 a.m.	Osceola County Sheriff's Office
N. Thacker Ave. & Kissimmee Trail (2310 N. Thacker Ave.)	9 – 11 a.m.	Kissimmee Police Department
Hoagland Blvd. & Hideaway Bay	11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.	Kissimmee Police Department
Lakeshore Blvd. & Michigan Ave.	9 a.m. to 10 a.m.	St. Cloud Police Department

THE FACTS: The [Florida Department of Highway Safety](#) reported 132 pedestrian crashes and 13 fatalities in Osceola County in 2017. Since 2012, pedestrian fatalities in Osceola County have increased by nearly 30%. Factors such as population growth, increase in distracted driving and more vehicles on Central Florida roads are contributing to this grim trend.

About Best Foot Forward Program in Metro Orlando

The Best Foot Forward pedestrian safety initiative was launched in June 2012 to reduce pedestrian crashes in Metro Orlando by getting drivers to yield to people walking in marked crosswalks, as Florida law requires. More than a campaign, this “Triple-E” behavioral change process seeks to create lasting social good through the consistent and persistent application of low-cost engineering, community education, and high-visibility enforcement.

Initiated and administered by Bike/Walk Central Florida, the Best Foot Forward coalition includes MetroPlan Orlando, Orange County Government and Sheriff's Office, Osceola County Government and Sheriff's Office, the City of Kissimmee Government and Police Department, the City of Orlando and Police Department, the City of St. Cloud and Police Department, Florida Department of Health, School District of Osceola County, Orange County Public Schools, Orlando Health, Lynx, Winter Park Health Foundation, the Florida Department of Transportation, Orange Cycle and the University of Miami's WalkSafe.

The long-term goal is to cut pedestrian injuries in half in ten years. The short-term goals are to increase driver yield rates by 60 percent on roads posted 35 mph and lower, and a 10 percent increase on driver yield rates year over year on roads posted 40 mph and higher. To learn more, visit www.iyield4peds.org.