

Vice Mayor Pat Dando's Office

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SAN JOSÉ LAUNCHES BACK-TO-SCHOOL TRAFFIC SAFETY CAMPAIGN

San José, California – The City of San José this week launched a major education campaign to improve traffic safety in school zones as kids start back to school. The Street Smarts Back-to-School campaign was officially kicked-off yesterday (08-28-03) by Vice Mayor Pat Dando at Williams Elementary School, in partnership with San José Unified School District, AAA, Safe Moves, the California Highway Patrol and the City's Transportation and Police departments. The effort combines education, enforcement and engineering to address problem behaviors to ensure the safety of kids as they return to school.

Vice Mayor Dando explained, "The message is clear: don't speed in school zones; don't double-park when dropping your kids off or picking them up; and don't park blocking the crosswalk. These behaviors can lead to serious injury for our children and we're launching this campaign to try to avoid that." The campaign targets all motorists in school zones, and especially focuses on parents, who can be the cause – often without realizing it - of major traffic safety violations that endanger children.

This week 120,000 back-to-school safety flyers were sent home with all San José elementary and middle school students; pedestrian safety posters were delivered to all elementary and middle schools in San José for every classroom; and large fence banners with the message, "***If You See Kids, Slow Down,***" were provided to a number of schools citywide to promote safety education. The Street Smarts program will also be conducting Bike Rodeos at 10 schools during the September-October timeframe to promote safe bicycling for students.

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In addition, the San José Police Department has dedicated resources in response to requests from school districts to begin enforcing traffic laws in school zones beginning with the first day of school, to prevent bad driving and parking habits from developing. On the engineering side, 32 school radar speed display signs have been installed at various locations citywide to warn drivers of their speed in school zones, and up to 10 crosswalks with pavement embedded lighting are planned for installation before the end of the school year, all to improve safety near schools.

Participating in yesterday's press conference were a number of the partners responsible for the development of the City's Street Smarts public education campaign, such as, Merry Banks, Senior Manager with the Northern California offices of AAA; Mike Carr, Director of Student Services representing San José Unified School District; Les Bishop, Public Affairs Officer with the California Highway Patrol; and Ray McMurphy, the Northern California Supervisor for Safe Moves, Inc. Also in attendance from the two departments that spearheaded the program were James Helmer, Director of Transportation for the City of San José and Acting Chief Tom Wheatley, San José Police Department, along with the Police Mounted Unit, and patrol and motorcycle units.

The purpose of the Street Smarts Back-to-School Traffic Safety campaign was to identify primary traffic safety issues related to the back-to-school timeframe; to inventory existing programs or efforts that currently address these issues; and to perform a gap analysis to determine what additional efforts were needed to enhance the safety of San José children as they headed back to school. The effort also explored how to better coordinate the resources of all the partners by leveraging existing efforts and pulling them together into a single, collaborative campaign.

For more information about *Street Smarts*, visit: www.GetStreetSmarts.org.

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