



COUNTY OF YOLO

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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District Attorney's DUI Program Receives Grant Funds

The DA's Office was awarded \$186,012 for its DUI program by the CA Office of Traffic Safety

(Woodland, CA) - October 22, 2015 - Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced today that the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) has awarded the District Attorney's Office \$186,012 for the continuation of its DUI vertical prosecution unit. The Unit, which was formed in 2012, focuses on the most serious and complex DUI cases, such as those involving injury and death, and those involving drug impairment. The Unit is led by Deputy District Attorney Barry Shapiro and Investigator John Shugart. Funding for the Unit allows Shapiro to handle a case through all stages of the criminal process, from the time of the arrest through sentencing. Additionally, the funding also allows the team to assist law enforcement in the investigation of fatal and major injury collisions.

DUI prosecution has always been a priority of the District Attorney's Office because of the danger these cases pose to the public. "DUIs, despite being one of the most preventable crimes, pose such an enormous danger to our community because anyone can be a potential victim. Once impaired drivers get behind the wheel, they lose control over what can turn into a deadly weapon," stated Shapiro. According to Chief Deputy District Attorney Jonathan Raven, the District Attorney's Office prosecutes thousands of DUIs each year, from misdemeanor offenses to DUI murder cases. The geographic layout of Yolo County, which includes the traversing of the County by Interstate 80 and Interstate 5, contributes to the high percentage of DUI cases, noted Raven.

While many of the DUI cases are alcohol-related, the Office has seen a steady increase in the number of drug-related DUIs in the county. Drivers are commonly being found under the influence of marijuana, prescription drugs, illegal street drugs, such as methamphetamine and heroin, or a combination of drugs and alcohol. According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's 2007 National Roadside Survey, more than 16 percent of weekend nighttime drivers tested positive for illegal, prescription, or over-the-counter drugs. More than 11 percent tested positive for illicit drugs. "The danger of driving while impaired by a drug is just as significant as the danger posed by alcohol impairment. Just because a drug is prescribed does not mean it is safe for an individual driver, and does not mean an individual can drive with that drug in his system," stated Shapiro.

The Unit does not just prosecute impaired drivers. In 2014, the Unit launched its “DUI in the Schools” Program where high school students throughout the County watch a real DUI trial. Too often young people get caught up in drugs or alcohol and then get behind the wheel of a car. This program is designed to show youth the dangers of DUI and the negative effects it can have on their lives. The hope is that by seeing a trial firsthand, students will make good choices and be successful in their endeavors.

District Attorney Jeff Reisig expressed his gratitude for the state funding. “Impaired driving is a problem that poses unjustifiable and dangerous risk to everyone on the road. This funding from OTS will allow us to continue our efforts on eradicating this problem and protecting the lives of Yolo County citizens every time they get behind the wheel of their car. Through outreach, training, and prosecution, we hope to make impaired driving a thing of the past,” said Reisig.

The purpose of the DUI program is to prevent impaired driving and reduce alcohol and drug-impaired traffic fatalities and injuries. Funding for the program comes from a grant by the California Office of Traffic Safety, through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

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