



COUNTY OF YOLO
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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District Attorney's DUI Program Receives Grant Funds
The CA Office of Traffic Safety awarded the DA's Office \$165,941 for its DUI program

(Woodland, CA) – January 30, 2018 – Yolo County District Attorney Jeff Reisig announced that last fall the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) awarded the District Attorney's Office \$165,941 for the continuation of its DUI program. The unit, which was formed in 2012, focuses on the prosecution and prevention of DUI cases as well as outreach, and law enforcement training. The program's goal is to prevent impaired driving and reduce alcohol and drug-impaired traffic fatalities and injuries.

The Deputy District Attorneys that are assigned to the program prosecute the most serious and complex DUI cases, such as those involving injury and death, and those involving drug impairment. Deputy District Attorneys assigned to these cases handle them through all stages of the criminal process, from the time of the arrest through sentencing. They also focused closely on training law enforcement throughout California on DUI investigation. To date, close to 1,000 officers have been reached through DUI training by the Yolo County District Attorney's OTS grant.

A key component of the program's goal to prevent impaired driving is community outreach. Too often young people get caught up in drugs or alcohol and get behind the wheel of a vehicle. In response to this alarming trend, in 2014, the team launched its "DUI in the Schools" program; a program where the team, in conjunction with its criminal justice partners, brings real DUI trials to High Schools in the County and is

designed for students to watch a real DUI trial so that the students can understand and appreciate the dangers of DUI and the negative consequences. The hope is that by seeing a trial firsthand, students will learn and make good choices while driving. Since beginning this program the Yolo County District Attorney's Office has reached nearly every high school in the area. In 2017 the team began working with the local Greek system at UC Davis in an effort to educate an at-risk community on the dangers of substance abuse.

While many DUI cases are alcohol-related, the County has seen a steady increase in drug-related DUIs. In these cases, 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. For example, on February 24, 2016, Steven Hendrix took the life of Cynthia Jonasen after driving nearly 40 mph over the speed limit and making multiple illegal passing maneuvers. Hendrix was determined to be under the influence of Marijuana and Methamphetamine. On May 31, 2017, after nearly a month long trial Hendrix was convicted of Gross Vehicular Manslaughter While Intoxicated, DUI With Injury, and Child Endangerment. Hendrix was sentenced to 42 years in State Prison. These cases often present greater challenges to officers on the streets and to prosecutors than alcohol-related DUIs. As a result, the DUI grant has been invaluable in helping prosecutors and officers develop greater expertise in the investigation and prosecution of these cases.

District Attorney Jeff Reisig continues to focus on the importance of combating DUI cases: "While most DUI cases are misdemeanors just a split second can change that by leaving unhealable scars on a victim, their family, and the community. Through the continued funding of this program by OTS our office can continue on educating the public on the dangers of not only DUI-alcohol, but also DUI-drugs. Our office's approach to DUI prevention, detection, and prosecution has proven to make a difference, and through the continued funding by OTS our office will continue to focus heavily on the safety of our community."

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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