



## PITTSBURGH POLICE OFFICER WINS NATIONAL "INNOVATION IN THE CLASSROOM" AWARD

Honored by peers at school resources officers national conference for program using pre-schoolers to teach safe driving behavior to teens.

**NEW YORK, June 25th, 2015** – Officer John Bruner (ret.), the school resource officer for the Keystone Oaks School District in suburban Pittsburgh, PA has been named the winner of the 2015 NASRO/National Road Safety Foundation "Innovation in the Classroom Award." The award, which will be presented at the annual conference of the National Association of School Resource Officers in Orlando on July 7th, recognizes innovative teaching of traffic safety in schools by a school resource officer (SRO). It carries with it a \$1,000 honorarium for school district where Officer Bruner teaches.

Officer Bruner, who retired after 18 years as an officer and detective at the nearby South Strabane Township Police Department, joined the Keystone Oaks School District as the Police and Safety Coordinator in February of this year. At a meeting with Scott Hagy, principal of the high school, he noticed a group of pre-schoolers on their way to class and said, half-joking, that teens will listen to little kids faster than they'd listen to their teachers or parents.

What began as an offhand remark formed the basis of Officer Bruner's award-winning program, the Pre-School Patrollers. The initial objective, said Officer Bruner, was to empower preschool students to educate high school students on the dangers of distracted driving. Coordinating with pre-school teacher Maria Dayka, who just-retired at the end of the school year, three pre-school students were selected, fitted for kid-size police uniforms and trained to deliver simple messages like "Don't text and drive" or "Don't eat and drive."

"This simple concept," said Officer Bruner, "expanded into a complete educational program that now educates elementary, middle school and high school students on not only distracted driving, but seat belt awareness, drinking and driving, bullying, gun safety and drug abuse as well. And the Pre-School Patrollers are at the heart of all the outreach efforts."

The Pre-School Patrollers are the focus of videos shown on school video monitors and on social media. They are also featured on posters and in school assembly programs. The youngsters and their message have been talk about not only throughout the schools, but at home and in the community.

The Pre-School Patrollers were used by the Keystone Oaks SADD program to strengthen their message about making productive decisions during prom season. Officer Bruner said the total cost of the program was less than \$200.

"We salute Officer Bruner and the entire Keystone Oaks School District for creating a program that is innovative and can be replicated in other districts nationwide," said Michelle Anderson, Director of Operations at The National Road Safety Foundation. "It's a great example of what we call reverse-mentorship, where younger kids effectively communicate safety messages to older peers, their parents and beyond."

"The impact of the program has been community-wide," noted Officer Bruner. "I hear from parents who tell me their kids, of all ages, constantly remind them in the car not to text and drive. The pre-schoolers and their message have made a real impression."

Mo Canady, Executive Director of the National Association of School Resource Officers, said, "This year's Innovation in the Classroom winner, Officer John Bruner, provides a great example of the positive impact of a police officer interacting with young people in a positive way that both teaches, inspires and promotes trust and understanding."

For more than 50 years, The National Road Safety Foundation (NRSF), a non-profit organization, has created driver education programs for free distribution to schools, police, traffic safety agencies, youth advocacy groups and others. NRSF has programs on speed and aggression, drinking and driving, and drowsy driving. Its newest programs, "Road Buzzed: A Look at Impaired Driving," "Generation tXt" and "Stay in the Picture", address impaired and distracted driving and prom and teen summer driving safety. NRSF also sponsors national contests for teens in partnership with SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) and Scholastic, and regionally with the Chicago Auto Show and the Los Angeles Auto Show. To view free programs and for more information, visit [www.nrsf.org](http://www.nrsf.org) or [www.teenlane.org](http://www.teenlane.org).

