



50% Of Drivers Fail to Yield at Crosswalks Within a ¼ Mile of Schools. *Law Enforcement Agencies target driver's unsafe behavior around schools during "Operation Best Foot Forward"; highlight the important work of local crossing guards.*

ORLANDO, FL – More than 50% of Central Florida drivers in Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties fail to yield to pedestrians in crosswalks within a quarter mile of schools, according to data collected by the Best Foot Forward for Pedestrian Safety (BFF) program. With a [crash injuring an Orlando Crossing Guard and a child](#) just a few weeks ago, law enforcement agencies from across the three-county region will be conducting a two-week high-visibility crosswalk enforcement operation dubbed *Operation Best Foot Forward* starting **Monday, January 30, and concluding Friday, February 10, 2023**. These efforts align with Crossing Guard Appreciation Day, honoring those working to keep our kids safe, taking place this year on Friday, February 3.

Best Foot Forward data shows that only 47% of drivers yield to pedestrians within crosswalks less than a 1/4 mile from a school when a crosswalk is brought into the program. Florida law requires that drivers yield to a pedestrian in every crosswalk, marked or otherwise, anywhere in the state. Over the ten-year history of Best Foot Forward, the program has monitored 283 crosswalks, and 17% are within 1/4 mile of a school. This year, 2023, the program monitors 77 crosswalks and 13 near schools. Fortunately, the BFF program and its coalition partners effectively combine education, engineering, and enforcement. As a result, the number of drivers yielding to pedestrians at crosswalks within a quarter mile of schools has increased by 25% at crosswalks that are a part of the Best Foot Forward program.

During *Operation Best Foot Forward*, plainclothes officers and deputies will cross streets at marked crosswalks, giving drivers enough time to slow down and stop safely. Drivers who do not stop [as Florida law requires](#) will be pulled over and face a minimum \$164 citation and three (3) points on their driver's license.

The two-week-long effort also aims to recognize the hard work and dedication of those who protect Florida's school children across the state. **Crossing Guard Appreciation Day** takes place on **Friday, February 3, 2023**. Last February, the Florida Department of Transportation named Seminole County Crossing Guard Pat Alfonso the 2021 Florida Crossing Guard of the Year. According to the 2022 proclamation by Governor Ron DeSantis, "Florida school crossing guards are professionals who provide an essential service to our communities and deserve special recognition for their tireless efforts." The Best Foot Forward program aims to magnify that recognition.

"Our crossing guards have a very important job to do, to get our kids safely across the road and on their way to school," said Emily Hanna, Executive Director of [Bike/Walk Central Florida](#), the nonprofit organization that administers the Best Foot Forward program. "We are focusing our enforcement efforts at crosswalks near schools to remind drivers to slow down in school zones and pay attention, not only for our children but also for our crossing guard community. That extra few seconds you take to slow down and pay attention through the school zone could save a life."

Operation Best Foot Forward is part of the Best Foot Forward coalition's larger effort to improve road safety through consistent and persistent education, high-visibility crosswalk enforcement, and low-cost engineering updates. Studies show that driver behavior changes when you combine these enforcement strategies, education, and engineering over a sustained period.

CROSSWALK LOCATIONS INCLUDE:

Participating Agency	Select Crosswalks	Adjacent School
Orange County Sheriff's Office	W. Oak Ridge Rd. & Wingate Dr.	Westridge Middle
Apopka P.D.	Votaw Rd. at Apopka Memorial Middle	Apopka Memorial Middle
Oakland P.D.	E Oakland Ave. at Oakland Avenue Charter School	Oakland Avenue Charter
Orlando P.D.	Millenia Blvd. & Timarron Dr.	Millennia Gardens Elementary
Winter Park P.D.	N. Lakemont Ave. & Yorkshire Dr.	Lakemont Elementary
Osceola County Sheriff's Office	TBD	TBD
Kissimmee P.D.	W Oak St. & Emory Ave.	Thacker Avenue Elementary
St. Cloud P.D.	Budinger Ave. & Peg Horn Way	St. Cloud Elementary (0.4 mi.)
Seminole County Sheriff's Office	Bear Lake Rd. & McNeil Rd.	Teague Middle School (0.4 mi.)
Longwood P.D.	S.R. 434 & Rangeline Rd.	

For a full list of crosswalk locations and to learn more about Operation Best Foot Forward and the Best Foot Forward program, visit iyield4peds.org/OperationBFF.

NOTE TO EDITORS AND PRODUCERS

Media is invited to *Operation Best Foot Forward*. Contact Eric Trull at (407) 569-8993 for more information.

ABOUT THE BEST FOOT FORWARD FOR PEDESTRIAN SAFETY PROGRAM

The Best Foot Forward for Pedestrian Safety (BFF) program is administered by the local non-profit Bike/Walk Central Florida (BWCF). BFF was created to reverse the conflict between pedestrians and drivers by focusing on one specific behavior change – getting more drivers to yield for pedestrians at marked crosswalks as [Florida law](#) requires. More than a campaign, Best Foot Forward is a behavior change-based program designed to improve road safety through consistent and persistent education, high-visibility crosswalk enforcement, and low-cost engineering countermeasures at marked crosswalks.

Best Foot Forward operates in Orange, Osceola, and Seminole Counties and is the largest pedestrian-focused grassroots coalition in the nation, working with more than 35 local and regional partners. Since launching in 2012, the percentage of drivers yielding to people in marked crosswalks has increased from 17% to more than 52% on roads with a speed limit of 35 mph and lower and 2% to 43% on roads 40 mph and higher. To learn more, visit iyield4peds.org.

ABOUT BIKE/WALK CENTRAL FLORIDA

BWCF is a 501(c)(3) formed in 2010, with a mission to make communities more walkable, bikeable, and rollable. Focusing on advocacy, education, and policy changes, BWCF is working to normalize walking and biking, striving towards a connected active-transportation network that is safe, equitable, and accessible encouraging people of all ages and abilities to bike and walk more in their community!

BWCF's efforts span several programs and projects to support its vision to transform Central Florida into a premiere biking and walking community. They:

- Facilitate the [Healthy West Orange Trails Connection](#), formed by the Foundation for a Healthier West Orange, accelerating the implementation of projects that support walking, cycling, and wellness activities.
- Coordinate the annual [BIKE 5 event](#) promoting safe bicycling routes and enhanced multi-use trails throughout Central Florida.
- Administer the [Best Foot Forward for Pedestrian Safety](#) program, the largest grassroots coalition in the country, reducing serious pedestrian injuries and fatalities.

To learn more, go to BikeWalkCentralFlorida.org.

###