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Shapiro Administration Recognizes Winners of Pennsylvania School Bus Safety Poster Contest, Driving Competition

School Bus Safety Week is Oct. 21-25

Harrisburg, PA – During a ceremony at the State Museum of Pennsylvania today, officials from the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation (PennDOT) and the Pennsylvania State Police, along with school bus safety advocates, honored ten students in kindergarten through eight grade for their school bus safety posters and three school bus drivers for their superior driving skills. The theme for this year’s contest was “Driving Safety into the Future.

The ceremony highlighted the Shapiro Administration’s efforts to enhance Pennsylvanians’ safety, including a proclamation by Governor Shapiro naming Oct. 21-25 [School Bus Safety Week in Pennsylvania](#) in conjunction with the federal observance. The week focuses on saving young lives by raising awareness of the daily challenges faced by students being transported throughout the commonwealth.

“The opening of school for another year means the return of school buses to our roads, and the Shapiro Administration is focused on everyone getting to school and back home safely,” said **PennDOT Driver and Vehicle Services Deputy Secretary Kara Templeton**. “School Bus Safety Week gives everyone a reason to pause and realize just how much our own actions behind the wheel can affect innocent young lives.”

Templeton and **Cpl. Zeina Black, School Bus Safety Division supervisor for the Commercial Vehicle Safety Division of the Bureau of Patrol for the Pennsylvania State Police**, presented the students with certificates and small gifts provided by the Pennsylvania School Bus Association in recognition of their efforts to help communicate this important safety message.

“By using their talent and creativity, these young artists help us share important safety messages through their creations,” said **Templeton**. “This year’s entries reinforce the importance of school bus drivers in delivering students to and from school safely and the role they play in students’ well-being today, tomorrow and beyond.”

This year's winners were chosen from 822 student entries from schools across Pennsylvania. The first-place entries will move on to the national competition, which will be judged at the end of this month.

2024 School Bus Safety Poster Contest Winners include:

Kindergarten – Grade 2

- **First Place:** Akshay Subash, Franklin Elementary School, Sewickley, Allegheny County.
- **Second Place:** Ziva Yerger, Selinsgrove Elementary School, Selinsgrove, Snyder County.
- **Third Place:** Braelyn Smith, Selinsgrove Elementary School, Selinsgrove, Snyder County.

Grades 3-5

- **First Place:** Lorelei Murphy, Shamokin Area Elementary and Intermediate School, Coal Township, Northumberland County.
- **Second Place:** Evalyn Regetta, North Star Middle School, Stoystown, Somerset County.
- **Third Place:** Akhil Phani Bonthu, Franklin Elementary School, Sewickley, Allegheny County.

Grades 6-8

- **First Place:** Noemi Barretta, Southern Middle School, Reading, Berks County.
- **Second Place:** Cathyanis Casiano Bonilla, Southern Middle School, Reading, Berks County.
- **Third Place:** Kolsen Clark, Bald Eagle Area Middle School, Wingate, Centre County.

Special Education

- **First Place:** Daniel Vega, Southern Middle School, Reading, Berks County.

No qualifying entries were submitted this year for the Computer Aided category.

During the ceremonies, officials also recognized the winners of the 45th Annual State School Bus Driver Safety Competition, held June 22-23 at Mount Nittany Middle School in State College. The event hosted more than 60 drivers locked in competition to determine the top school bus drivers in the state.

The winners in the conventional bus category this year were:

- **First place:** Cheryl Vogelsang with On the Go Kids in Chester County.
- **Second place:** Joanne Cowan with Krapf School Bus in Chester County.

- **Third place:** Arlen Sanden with Krise Transportation in Chester County.

There was no competition for Transit-style buses this year.

“Bus drivers are on the front lines and in the public eye every day doing an extraordinary job by ensuring the safety of our children as they travel to and from school,” said **Cpl. Black**. “Their continuing dedication to the safe delivery of their precious cargo reinforces the trust parents have in them.”

In a collective effort to enhance students’ safety, local and state law enforcement agencies, school districts and student transportation agencies unite today to raise awareness of the consequences of improperly passing school buses. “Operation Safe Stop,” a statewide safety initiative, involves both police officers watching for motorists who violated the school bus stopping law and school bus drivers documenting any illegal passes occurring on their routes. Reports of these infractions are later filed with local police.

State law requires motorists approaching a school bus with its red lights flashing and stop arm extended, to stop at least 10 feet from the bus. Motorists approaching from all directions are required to stop. However, motorists who encounter a school bus stopping on the opposite side of a divided highway are not required to stop when a divider, such as concrete barriers or grassy medians, clearly separates lanes of the highway.

In 2023, more than 500 motorists were convicted of violating Pennsylvania’s school bus stopping law. One hundred sixty-five law enforcement agencies and 18 school districts combined efforts last year to report violators of the School Bus Stopping Law during Operation Safe Stop. School bus drivers in Pennsylvania traveled over 434 million miles during the school year 2022/23, transporting more than 1.4 million students daily.

For more information about school bus safety, visit PennDOT the [School Bus Safety page](#) on its [highway safety website](#).

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