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Biridiana Lua-Garcia of Bermudian Springs High School Wins PNA, AT&T It Can Wait Editorial Contest

HARRISBURG, Pa., March 7, 2017 – Biridiana Lua-Garcia, a senior at Bermudian Springs High School, York Springs, is the 2017 winner of the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association Foundation’s “It Can Wait” editorial contest.

Lua-Garcia receives a \$500 cash prize to be awarded on April 12, in conjunction with the PNA Foundation’s Student Keystone Press Awards luncheon during the America East Media Business and Technology Conference in Hershey, Pa.

Since 2015, the PNA Foundation, along with PNA and PNA member newspapers, has partnered with AT&T to host an “It Can Wait” editorial contest to raise awareness about the dangers of distracted driving. This year, high school students were asked to write a column or editorial that best answers the question, "Why is it important to take the It Can Wait pledge to keep your eyes on the road, not on your phone?"

Beginning last fall, PNA members hosted local contests and encouraged high school students to help to make our roadways safer for Pennsylvanians. A winner was recognized in each community and entered into the statewide contest, which drew more than 200 entries from across the state. Lua-Garcia was recognized by the *Gettysburg Times*.

“We teamed up with the PA NewsMedia Association for this contest so we could remind young Pennsylvanians that no text, post or scroll while driving is worth a life,” said J. Michael Schweder, president, AT&T Mid-Atlantic. “Congratulations to Biridiana for such a powerful essay. We hope drivers of all ages will hear her message: ‘Distracted driving is never OK... Take the It Can Wait pledge.’”

In selecting Lua-Garcia as the Pennsylvania winner, judges commented that, “Biridiana’s essay was both powerful and stark in revealing the devastating consequences that distracted driving can have on the driver, as well as others in the car, on the road, and in their families. Her essay impacted each of us who read it, and presented a compelling case for taking the pledge – and encouraging your friends and family to do the same.”

Because of the number of outstanding entries, additional awards were added in 2017. Abby Riggio, a senior at Blackhawk High School, Beaver Falls, receives second place honors, while Leah Jameson, a West York Area High School junior, places third. Riggio, Jameson and their parents are invited to the Student Keystone Press Awards luncheon where they will receive framed certificates.

Distracted driving is involved in more than 200,000 vehicle crashes each year, often involving injuries and death. Despite knowing the risks, seven in 10 drivers engage in smart phone activity while driving, and four in 10 teens admit to social networking while driving.

“It Can Wait” is a national movement urging drivers to visit www.ItCanWait.com, where they can pledge to keep their eyes on the road, not on their phone, and share their pledges via Twitter (#ItCanWait) and

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Facebook. Since its launch in 2010, the campaign has helped increase awareness of the dangers of texting while driving to about 90 percent for all audiences surveyed and inspired more than 14.2 million pledges not to text and drive.

About PNA: The PNA, founded in 1925, is the nonprofit trade association for print and digital news media in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. Its mission is to advance the business interests of Pennsylvania news media organizations and to promote a free and independent press. It has more than 300 newspaper and media-related members, including daily, weekly, and college newspapers and online publications.

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