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Mandy Ritter of West Perry High School Wins PNA Foundation, AT&T It Can Wait Editorial Contest

HARRISBURG, Pa., April 28, 2021 – Mandy Ritter, a junior at West Perry High School, Elliptsburg, is the 2021 winner of the Pennsylvania NewsMedia Association Foundation’s “It Can Wait” editorial contest.

Ritter receives a \$500 cash prize and certificate which will be mailed in May. For the second year, the annual Student Keystone Media Awards luncheon where It Can Wait winners are celebrated – along with other high school and college journalists – has been canceled due to pandemic restrictions.

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. High school students are asked to write a column or editorial or produce a short video that best answers the question, "Why is it important to take the It Can Wait pledge to drive distraction free?"

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 in the statewide contest, which drew more than 100 entries from across the state.

In selecting Ritter as the Pennsylvania winner, judges commented, “Mandy’s video was simple, yet dramatically powerful in its message. Her use of graphics, poignant music and her calm voiceover at the end combined to create a can’t-miss moment of clarity as to the dangers and losses associated with distracted driving.”

Additional students were recognized with second and third place awards. Naomi Brown, a junior at Sullivan Country High School, receives second place honors featuring a \$250 prize, while Jocelyn Stevenson, a Neshaminy High School freshman, places third with \$150 included. Brown was also recognized by The Sullivan Review, Dushore.

Distracted driving is involved in hundreds of thousands of vehicle crashes each year, often involving injuries and death. Despite knowing the risks, nearly nine out of ten people admit to using their smartphones while driving and four in ten drivers call distracted driving a habit.

“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 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 40 million pledges not to text and drive.

About PNA Foundation:

The PNA Foundation is an independent, non-profit corporation organized as a public foundation. Its mission is to provide training and resources to PNA members, to develop the next generation of readers and journalists, and to educate the public on the importance of the First Amendment and the role of a free press.

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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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