

## Tomorrow's Headline Makers, Today: Friday Night Live Programs in Orange County

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*Orange County Friday Night Live Partnership*

### Abstract

The Orange County Friday Night Live Programs comprise three, youth-led programs designed to foster youth leadership skills while learning to engage in healthy lifestyles free of drugs, tobacco, and alcohol. The three programs discussed are Friday Night Live, Club Live, and Friday Night Live Kids.

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### Friday Night Live Background

“Prevention is the destination, youth development is the vehicle” is the vision statement for one of Orange County's leading youth development organizations. The Orange County Friday Night Live (OCFNL) Programs use the youth development approach to prevention. The goal of these programs is to shape tomorrow's leaders today, with the skills to make healthy choices and positive changes. Through leadership, advocacy, and volunteerism, young people lead school chapters to effect change in their community regarding alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs issues important to them.

The programs started 19 years ago in 1984. The State Office of Alcohol and Drug Programs and the State Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) developed a pilot program in Sacramento County, later renamed Friday Night Live. In Sacramento, more teen motorists were either killed or injured while driving under the influence of alcohol or other drugs on Friday nights than any other day of the week. The goal was to decrease the number of car collisions by providing alternative extracurricular activities in which young people may participate.

Over the first four years, the program proved so successful that in 1988, it expanded statewide.

In 1990, the program had grown by over 300% and began shifting its mission from primarily drinking and driving prevention among teens to promoting healthy lifestyles free of alcohol, tobacco, or other substance abuse among youth. Today, 54 of the 58 Counties in California have the Friday Night Live Program.

### Orange County Friday Night Live Programs

In April 1992, the Friday Night Live Program was established in Orange County. The program began with the implementation of Friday Night Live high school chapters throughout the county. Due to the overwhelming success of the OCFNL Program, a second program was started for middle school students in June 1994, called *Club Live Program*. A third program was established for fourth to sixth graders in 1997, called *Friday Night Live Kids Program*. The OCFNL, Club Live, and Friday Night Live Kids Program Partnership became a comprehensive program known as *Friday Night Live Programs*. The OCFNL Programs has continued to grow throughout the county and now provides support for over 45 chapters in Orange County, and has for the past four years supported a countywide youth council. Currently, OCFNL Programs has ten volunteers in the youth council who provide youth-input on OCFNL Programs projects and create action plans around issues important to young people in Orange County (Figure 1).



Figure 1  
Orange County Friday Night Live Program Youth Advisory Council Members

In Spring of 2002, the Friday Night Live Youth Advisory Council (Youth Council) submitted a grant proposal to conduct an anti-drinking and driving campaign, and was awarded \$7500. for their media advocacy project.

On December 5, 2002, at The Block at Orange, an outdoor mall in Orange County, the Youth Council unveiled their first billboard (Figure 2). The theme of the event was “drunk driving

kills.” Community members were invited to participate in an event featuring an interactive drinking and driving simulation (Figure 3), interactive community organization booths, and the unveiling of our campaign billboard. Driving Under the Influence/Driving While Intoxicated and traffic safety awareness materials were provided to community members.



Figure 2  
2002 Drunk Driving Kills Billboard



Figure 3  
Teens Participating in the Drinking and Driving Simulation at Billboard Unveiling

In addition to these media campaigns, the young people involved in the OCFNL Programs are given a variety of opportunities which are designed to build their capacity and leadership skills. Students are first provided training on how to run a chapter or club at their school/community site. The chapter is where a group of young people, along with an adult advisor, work together to make a positive impact on their community. OCFNL Programs recruits the non-traditional leader. Through club rushes and membership rallies, young people are motivated to join OCFNL Programs' youth-led and youth-driven prevention club.

OCFNL Programs offer opportunities in a broad range of topics that ultimately provide young

people with the motivation and skills needed to successfully oversee a chapter into action. These include Skill Development, Opportunities, Community Service, Social Action, Mentoring and Outreach.

#### **Program Evaluation**

Each year OCFNL Programs members are administered a youth survey which measures the statewide standards of practice/performance outcomes: Youth involved in the program experience: 1) a safe environment; 2) involvement and connection to school and community; 3) leadership and advocacy; 4) meaningful skill building activities; and 5) meaningful youth/adult relationships.

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