

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Steph Routh
Willamette Pedestrian Coalition
Office: (503) 223-1597
steph@wpcwalks.org

**PEDESTRIAN ADVOCACY ORGANIZATION CALLS FOR CAUTION,
SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS**

A Number of Recent Crashes Involving Pedestrians Indicate the Need for Immediate Response and Change

PORTLAND, Ore., Nov. 5, 2009 – It has been a deeply troubling week . On Saturday morning, Oct. 31, Benjamin Story was struck in a hit and run collision when on Highway 99E just north of Aurora. On Sunday afternoon, Nov. 1, John Thomas Nelson was hit and critically injured on Highway 217. On Sunday evening, Nov. 1, Lindsay Leonard was killed and Jessica Finlay suffered serious injuries while crossing in a marked crosswalk on 80th and SE Foster. On Monday afternoon, Nov. 02, Susan Ogilvy was struck while crossing Scholls Ferry Road near Beaverton Hillsdale Highway.

“The sheer number of serious collisions between pedestrians and cars this past week demonstrates that our traffic safety deficit is not found in one person’s error,” says Steph Routh, Director of the Willamette Pedestrian Coalition. “It is not about one specific engineering problem. Our region continues to grapple with broad-spectrum traffic safety issues that jeopardize all road users. We need to invest far more funding in developing a network of streets that accommodate all users – pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders and motorists - throughout our region as well as raising awareness about everyone’s rights and responsibilities as road users.”

Funding is essential to improving our region’s pedestrian environment. Entire neighborhoods remain without sidewalks. Pedestrian connections to bus stops and business centers are incomplete or absent in many areas. Additional funding is necessary, and our elected officials need to prioritize transportation that is used by everyone, for everyone is a pedestrian at some point in their day. The recent transportation bill that passed the state legislature, for example, did not raise the minimum spending on bicycle and pedestrian facilities from 1% to 1.5%, which would have been a small but a positive step. Instead, we received earmarks for highway projects. This is recessive and needs to change.

Awareness is also an important aspect of traffic safety. Pedestrian needs are real, and both pedestrian and motorists need to be more aware of each other. The number one cause of pedestrian injury in Portland is failure of drivers to yield to pedestrians in a crosswalk. Many drivers are unaware that every corner is a crosswalk, even if the crosswalk is unmarked, and that drivers in Oregon must stop and stay stopped for pedestrians at any corner.

There will be a quiet safety awareness action along SE Foster Rd near 80th Ave. on Tuesday, 10 November 5:00-6:30pm. If you would like to participate, you are invited to bring a homemade sign that asks everyone to watch out for one another and to share the road safely. Please contact the Willamette Pedestrian Coalition with any questions or comments: [HYPERLINK "mailto:steph@wpcwalks.org"](mailto:steph@wpcwalks.org) steph@wpcwalks.org.

As we move into fall and winter months, it is imperative that pedestrians and drivers alike be cognizant of their surroundings, and that drivers recognize their added responsibility due to greater speeds and vehicle weight.

Let us keep each other safe, and let us invest in a safer streetscape for everyone. As we grieve the loss of one young woman and think of others in serious condition, we should be more vigilant in our safekeeping of our fellow citizens.

About the Willamette Pedestrian Coalition:

The Willamette Pedestrian Coalition (WPC) is a non-profit community-based membership organization in the greater Portland, Oregon area dedicated to promoting walking and making the conditions for walking safe and attractive. The WPC advocates for better laws, enhanced enforcement, more sidewalks and signed crosswalks, education programs, community improvements designed for pedestrians, and increased funding to support these activities. For more information about the Willamette Pedestrian Coalition, please visit www.wpcwalks.org.

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