

Safety in a snap

Car seats, bike helmets protect children


Economically eligible adults in Holmes, Jackson and Washington may purchase children's car seats at reduced prices at child passenger safety workshops in each of the three counties. The class will update parents and caregivers on the latest technology and techniques for child passenger safety. Any group or civic organization wanting information about car seats and safety may participate in the workshop.

Paul Segers, who recently became the Washington County Health Department's Passenger Safety and Injury Prevention Coordinator, is working in the tri-county area to educate children, parents, and caregivers about using child passenger safety seats and bicycle helmets. A grant through the Florida Department of Transportation funds the program to help reduce injuries on Florida's highways.

Safety programs in the school systems, Head Start programs and daycare centers throughout the three counties will teach children to buckle up when they go riding. In partnership with the school systems, each county will attempt to reduce the number of children injured or killed in vehicle crashes and to save resources, as well. Studies have proven that every dollar spent on child restraints saves \$33 medical and societal costs, explained Segers.

In addition to passenger safety, Segers will coordinate bike rodeos to promote safe riding and bike helmet use. The bike rodeos are designed to teach safety and real world skills that children need to survive on today's roads. Looking back without swerving, riding straight while missing potholes and rocks and crossing busy streets without getting hit by cars are just a few of the skills the children will practice. Meanwhile, the adult participants will learn proper bike safety concepts to continue the instruction at home after the rodeo is over.

Since about 75 percent of all fatalities are caused by head injuries, children will have an opportunity to buy properly-fitting, inexpensive bike helmets. The reduced-price helmets are available through support from the Florida DOT and donations by area civic groups.

Through these educational awareness campaigns and distribution of safety devices, Segers and the local health departments will work together to decrease the number of child injuries on Florida's highways and residential streets. For more information and the car seat class schedule, call Segers at the Washington County Health Dept. at (850)638-6240. 

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