

Care, Comfort and Hope

Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits

Unintentional Injuries

A teen arrives in the emergency department by ambulance following a terrible car accident. A child receives head injuries while bicycling without a helmet. A woman walks into the emergency department with injuries inflicted by an abusive spouse. These are stories of pain and tragedy that hospital personnel see all too often. Injury is the most under recognized major public health problem facing the country and it is the leading cause of death in people ages 1 to 44 in Wisconsin. Wisconsin hospitals devote significant resources to reduce the number of intentional and unintentional injuries that occur in the communities they serve.



If just one life is saved...

Westfields Hospital, New Richmond, partnered with the local police department and Community Education to host a bike rodeo to conduct bike and helmet safety checks. The event was geared to kindergarten through 6th grade. Children had the opportunity to learn the rules of the road by riding through a safety course.

"This is one of the key initiatives West Central Wisconsin Regional Trauma Advisory Council (RTAC) recommends hospitals support within their community," says Tom Peterson, RN, Emergency



Services for Westfields Hospital and the hospital representative on the Council. Bike helmets were given away to children who did not have a helmet, or those whose helmets did not fit or were not safe.

"With two state highways running through our downtown, New Richmond is a dangerous place for bike riders of any age. It is especially important to do what we can to teach bike safety to our younger riders," he adds.

Westfields Hospital, New Richmond

50 winners received bike helmets at the Grant County Fair

Boscobel Area Health Care gave away 50 helmets at the Grant County Fair to area youth and adults.

"Pediatric safety has been a big priority for us this year," says Emergency Room Nurse Manager Amy Franklin. "A bike helmet is a simple piece of equipment that can make a big difference in preventing serious injury."

Boscobel Area Health Care decided to give out bike helmets at the fair because of the great response they received at their open house in April, where they gave helmets to 150 children.

"It feels great to see children around the community wearing them," said Franklin.

Pediatric injury prevention had been identified as a community benefit goal for the 2008-2009 year, says Community Relations Coordinator Mary Sprosty.

"We are pulling all of our smaller community benefit efforts into a larger, more comprehensive plan with defined goals and outcomes. This year we will focus on preventing pediatric injury through programs focusing on bike helmet and car seat use," says Sprosty.

Sprosty said Boscobel Area Health Care has partnered with local schools and police departments to carry out these efforts. The three organizations will sponsor a bike safety day, community car seat checks, and educational programs at the school.

Boscobel Area Health Care, Boscobel

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Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

Aurora participates in 2009 West Bend Police & Fire Bike and Safety Jamboree

On May 17 Aurora Medical Center in Washington County participated in the West Bend Police and Fire Bike & Safety Jamboree, an annual community event that promotes bike safety for families.

Over 300 children with their parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles lined up to register their bikes, receive a free bike helmet donated by Aurora and fitted by Aurora personnel, have their bikes inspected for safety and have the opportunity to go through an obstacle course to test their safety skills.

After completing the course, attendees had the chance to explore an EMS vehicle, talk to law enforcement and fire and rescue personnel. Youngsters received a personal child safety ID badge. Aurora staffed a health-information booth.

Aurora Medical Center in Hartford

Sight-tation program rewards safety

A young person bicycles down a quiet, city street. A Ripon squad car pulls along side, motions for the youngster to pull over.

The officer approaches the youngster with something in his hand. It looks like a citation, but thankfully, it isn't. It's a "sight-tation"—and it's redeemable at Culver's for a free cone to reward the youngster for wearing a bike helmet.

Sight-tations are issued to both youth and adults "caught" in the act of doing the right thing by wearing their helmets when they're biking, skating or roller-blading. The goal of the program is to reduce head injuries by promoting the increased use of helmets.

Aurora Health Care has been sponsoring the Sight-tation program in other Fox Valley area communities with popular local ice cream or custard vendors. They found a willing partner in the Ripon Police Department to bring the program to life in Ripon in 2008. Police Captain Chris Stieber appreciated the opportunity to interact with community members for a positive, proactive purpose.

During the summer of 2009, the program has moved into Winneconne and Oshkosh.

Aurora Health Care, Milwaukee

Hundreds learn safety lessons at National Night Out



Safety was the lesson of the night as over 400 area residents got a chance to meet law enforcement officials and learn ways to make their community safe during Monroe County National Night Out in Tomah's Winnebago Park.

Coordinated by Tomah Memorial Hospital, more than 40 public safety, law enforcement, fire and rescue plus not-for profit organizations throughout the county offered information on a wide range of safety issues.

"This is an excellent opportunity to show the public just how well all law enforcement agencies in Monroe County work together to combat our common goal which is crime, and promote public safety at the same time," Sparta Police Chief Mike Kass said.

Nearly 200 children got a hands-on safety lesson during a riding course set up as part of the Tomah Police Dept.'s Bike and Blading Expo held during the event.

"Any time we have a large gathering of kids and we can promote safety, especially in the area of bike safety and rollerblading and roller skating, we're satisfied," Police Lt. Ron Waddell said.

"Over the years we have seen a steady increase in helmet use, especially at the bike rodeo,

but until we can get 100 percent of the kids wearing them, it's still a concern." Waddell said officials will make helmet use "mandatory" at next year's bike event.

Tomah Memorial Hospital, Tomah

Reducing cycling injuries in kids one helmet at a time

According to the Bicycle Safety Institute, about 67,000 bicyclists visit emergency rooms with head injuries each year—injuries that often can be prevented by wearing a helmet.

To reduce the number of such injuries in northeast Wisconsin, ThedaCare hospitals have distributed to kids in kindergarten through fifth grade upwards of 15,000 free Bell bicycle helmets since 1998. That includes 1,441 helmets worth more than \$50,000 fitted and handed out at bicycle safety events held at the Appleton and Neenah-Menasha YMCAs on May 3, 2008, and at the Boys and Girls Club in Oshkosh on May 9, 2009.

"For kids, we know that it's not a matter of if they will fall, it's when," says Paul Jenson, ThedaCare community involvement specialist. "We'll never know exactly how many kids don't show up in the ER with injuries because of this program, but we know that these helmets keep kids safer."

So, too, do the annual events' bike safety lessons that kids must complete before receiving their helmets. Stations

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staffed by ThedaCare employee-volunteers teach kids the rules of the road and proper hand signals, all with one goal in mind.

“It’s really a matter of education for parents and kids,” Jenson says. “Once parents understand the importance of wearing a helmet, they’ll remind kids to put them on.”

“Part of the ThedaCare vision is to improve the health of the community we serve, and certainly one way to do it is to keep kids out of the ER.”

ThedaCare, Appleton

Boy gets new bike helmet from St. Nicholas Hospital

One of the most enjoyable summer activities is riding a bike outside. This is a great activity to get people outside and get some exercise at the same time.

As with any outdoor activity, it’s always a good idea to take some safety precautions. One of the most important precautions anyone can take is to wear a helmet. It’s the best way to prevent head injuries. Eighty percent of bicycle-related head injuries can be prevented with properly fitted bicycle helmets. When getting a bike helmet most people go to a store to purchase the helmet. They don’t think of a hospital as an outlet for helmet sales.

Darryl Ottman recently called Susie Runaas, community education lead specialist, to ask for a bike helmet replacement for his son. Clayton, Darryl’s son, had purchased a bike helmet and received a fitting from St. Nicholas Hospital during a bike helmet fitting session the hospital held leading up to Bike/Walk to Work/School Week in May.

Clayton was riding his bike on the road to a summer athletic program one morning, was going to get on the sidewalk, misjudged the sidewalk and had a bike crash. Clayton had a lot of road rash and was sore. He didn’t realize he had hit his head until his dad showed him the helmet. There was a small crack on the helmet located where Clayton’s temple was. Even though the crack may have seemed minor, it saved Clayton from having a more severe head injury.

Clayton was able to exchange his cracked bike helmet for a new helmet, free of charge, from St. Nicholas Hospital.

St. Nicholas Hospital, Sheboygan



Bike Safety/ bike helmets

Each year, River Falls Area Hospital (RFAH) partners with the local fire department to sponsor a bike rodeo during Town & Country Days, a celebration of River Falls’ agricultural heritage. Area youth and families are invited to this free event, which includes bike registration, bike helmet fitting, bike alignment, and bike

safety instruction, including time on the bike safety course set up in the parking lot of Meyer Middle School.

The 2008 event on June 19 consisted of nurses from RFAH helping staff the helmet checks on all participants. RFAH also provided free replacement to participants whose helmet was found to be inadequate.



River Falls Area Hospital, River Falls

ThinkFirst Program

Every year, over 500,000 people in the U.S. sustain some form of brain or spinal injury, with the leading causes being motor vehicle crashes, violence, falls, sports and recreation. Injuries like these are the leading cause of death among children and teens.

The ThinkFirst program is a nationwide, award-winning, evidence-based program intent upon teaching young people how to avoid or reduce their chances of being injured. Mercy Health System implemented the ThinkFirst program in 2008, to provide educational outreach for school-aged children in Janesville, Wisconsin and the surrounding area. Mercy’s community education coordinators visit schools in Rock County to teach kids about the importance of thinking first to stay safe in any activity.

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Wisconsin Hospitals Community Benefits (continued)

Mercy's ThinkFirst program has been busy this year, with several visits to local parochial and public schools and hosting community events to promote various safety topics. The most recent collaboration, working with the Janesville Police Department, was the Bike Rodeo, a community event where children and adults are taught bike and helmet safety. Many of program participants received bike helmets as well. Mercy's future initiatives will include promoting brain and spinal cord safety at Rock County summer fair events, a focus on proper bike riding and helmet fitting demonstrations, helmet importance and bike safety issues.

"Since our program started, we've been able to reach 800 students so far," says Terry Michel, community education coordinator. "This is another example of how Mercy is filling a must-needed void in our community to promote behavior change and the importance of good decision making."

Mercy's curriculum includes brain and spinal cord safety, vehicle and pedestrian safety, bike safety, weapons and problem solving, playground, recreation, sports and water safety. Mercy plans to eventually implement the ThinkFirst Program into local high schools.

Michel adds, "Just this past month, after a session, a child came up to me and said 'you can buy a new toy, but you can't buy a new brain.' It feels good because I know I've done my job."

Mercy Health System, Janesville

Langlade Hospital promotes bicycle safety

"Gearing up" mentally before bicycling, rollerblading or skateboarding is just as important as gearing up physically. In an effort to avoid and reduce serious bicycle injuries, Langlade Hospital once again visited first grade classrooms in the school districts of Antigo, Elcho, Birnamwood and White Lake to promote bicycle safety.

Langlade Hospital Emergency Department personnel visited area elementary schools and nearly 300 first-graders to help children understand the importance of using a safe bike and riding safely, to understand traffic laws and the basic bicycle safety guidelines and the importance of bicycle helmets.

"Every first grade student will be properly fitted for and presented with a free bicycle helmet along with bike safety information," said Sue McVey, manager of emergency services at Langlade Hospital. "A local helmet program can help make helmets seem "cool" to kids, and they may show less resistance to wearing a helmet while riding a bike, a skateboard or while rollerblading."

"This program is our gift to the community in hope of reducing the number of children who visit emergency rooms every year because of bicycle injuries," said Dave Schneider, executive director of Langlade Hospital. "We are offering this program to our community as a gift of service and we hope the parents, guardians, and children enjoy this program as much as we enjoy giving the gift of safety and education to our communities."

The hospital program is a prelude to the Antigo Optimist Club's Bike Safety Rodeo, which will be held in May.

Langlade Hospital, Antigo

Submit community benefit stories to Mary Kay Grasmick, editor, at mgrasmick@wha.org.



Read more about hospitals connecting with their communities at www.WiServePoint.org.