



HELMET PROMOTION

Traffic, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Safety Education Duval County Health Department Jacksonville, Florida

Innovative Helmet Purchasing Provides Ongoing Funding

Imagine doubling the number of bicycle helmets available for distribution in your project! Would you like a fleet of trailers filled with bicycle safety equipment? Would you be committed enough to be turned down twice for funding and then submit a third time? Here's how the Duval County Traffic, Bicycle, and Pedestrian Safety Education Project, part of a Safe Community project, did it.

Three strikes and you're funded

When Steve McCloskey became the Injury Prevention Coordinator of the Duval County Health Department in October, 1994, he looked at the rates of fatal injuries for the county - bicycle fatalities weren't a significant contributor to the injury death rate. As he looked over the police crash reports, provided by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, he quickly saw that bicycle injuries - especially in children 5 - 14 years old - were a major problem. He decided to do something about them.



Steve's first step was to identify groups and organizations that would be logical partners in promoting bicycle safety. Duval County, like most metropolitan areas in Florida, has a Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Council (BPAC). BPAC advises the metropolitan planning groups on bicycle and pedestrian issues.

With BPAC as a partner, McCloskey applied to the Jacksonville Rotary Club for a \$55,000 grant to support a school-based bicycle and pedestrian safety project. His proposal was turned down. Steve applied again for funding - this time to the City of Jacksonville Children's Commission. Again the project was denied funding. Finally, his third request for funding - to the Florida Department of Transportation - was approved - for the next three years!

When it rains it pours. In short order, the program received another grant - \$100,000 - the entire proceeds of a charity golf tournament - from the Genesis Health Foundation. Genesis Health Company had planned to

establish its own helmet promotion program, but McCloskey convinced them that the proposed bicycle and pedestrian safety project would be able to promote injury prevention more effectively and give Gensis more “bang for the buck.” On his way to the bank, McCloskey received *another* \$1,500 from the Jacksonville Pilot Club, a professional women’s service club.

Teaching the Teachers

McCloskey, along with two teachers from the Duval County elementary school physical education program, received training in pedestrian and bicycle safety using a curriculum developed by Linda Crider, Ph.D. who is at the University of Florida in Gainesville. They began a series of 2-day teacher training sessions with the physical education teachers who were eventually going to teach the students.



Almost all of the 55 physical education teachers from the county’s 99 elementary schools have been trained, and they, in turn, will begin training half of the Duval County’s elementary student population of 75,000 during the upcoming school year.

The Helmet Sales Kit

A key feature of the Traffic, Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education Program is the sale of helmets to elementary students. After carefully specifying helmet standards, colors, design, and other features, the Traffic, Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education Program requested several helmet manufacturers to bid on supplying

the helmets. About \$150,000 was used to purchase 20,000 helmets.

A helmet sales kit was assembled to be sent to each elementary school on a “by request” basis. In each kit were samples of the different types and colors of helmets, ordering forms, and specific instructions how to measure and fit helmets. Two or three adult volunteers - from PTAs or booster clubs - manned the helmet sales tables and fitted and sold helmets before and after school.

The helmets were

purchased directly from a major manufacturer by the Safe Communities program for between \$6.75 and \$8.25 and were resold to the students at a reduced price of \$4.00-5.00, depending on model and design. With the money generated from

the resale, another 30,000 helmets was purchased.

A decision was made not to offer free helmets to anyone. “It would have been too difficult to determine which children were unable to afford purchasing helmets,” said McCloskey. “Instead, we encouraged parents, PTAs, and other groups to purchase helmets from us and in turn give them to children in need. Through this system of donations, no child was denied a helmet because she was unable to pay for it.”

So far, the helmet sales kits have been in one-third of the county’s schools.

Equipment to Go

Bicycle safety training is equipment intensive. The program solved the problem of transporting this equipment to the schools in custom designed 14 foot trailers. These trailers, pulled by trucks from the health department, contain everything necessary to conduct a bicycle safety program - bicycles, helmets, safety cones, visual props, lane markers, etc.

Who's Counting?

A crucial part of all injury programs - and the part most often overlooked - is evaluation. Besides continually examining fatality and police crash reports for changes in injury patterns, the Traffic, Bicycle and Pedestrian Safety Education Program periodically monitors helmet use by observing bicyclists. In the first year of the program, helmet wearing has increased - for all age groups - from 19% to 47%. In the 1-12 age group, wearing has increased more than 400% - from 13.8% to 58.7%. McCloskey believes that this increase is a result of the synergy between the helmet promotion campaign, the helmet sales program, and Florida's new law requiring children to wear bicycle helmets.

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program has several interesting features. First, it is funded by a variety of sources, from state government as well as from a local charity and from a service club. The program has a unique helmet purchase and resale program that allows it to double of the number of helmets available for distribution. The program allows no free helmets, apparently with little downside effect. Parents and the police have been contributing towards helmet purchases for needy children. The program is also closely integrated with the school system. The Board of Education has required that all elementary students receive traffic and bicycle safety training and school facilities and employees are used for the training. Lastly, the program's built-in evaluation component has show a substantial rise in helmet used - the effect of various program and legislative elements.



Comment:
This safety promotion

Reports were developed under cooperative agreement between NHTSA Region IV and Emory University Center for Injury Control