

Spreading the word about helmet safety

August 17, 2009

WELLAND — Safe Communities Welland was using its head Saturday to spread the word about helmet safety.

The launch of a program aimed at educating children about the proper use of helmets in all sports was held at Niagara Region Children's Safety Village under sunny skies.

"We asked for a perfect day and we got a perfect day, Safe Communities Welland interim chair Pam Swick-Janjac said.

The first annual Kids Safety Festival may have emphasized helmet safety, but there were plenty of emergency care workers on site to provide those who attended with plenty to think about, where taking care is concerned.

One attraction that appeared popular with the children in attendance was SUD Skates, based out of St. Catharines. The skateboard club was set up on the main drag of the village performing stunts.

Throughout the day, children used a special passport to navigate various safety booths. After the passport had been stamped at each checkpoint, it was entered in a draw for a free helmet. The initiative was able to provide more than 30 bike helmets to participants.

"One thing that we found kept coming up in our meetings was the issue of helmets, helmets, helmets," Swick-Janjac said. "It wasn't just bike helmets but helmets for all sports."

Swick-Janjac said the Safety Festival at is actually the kickoff of a much larger helmet safety campaign. It will include other sports as the different sport seasons require.

Some of the organizations helping out with the campaign include Buckner's Sports Centres and Thornton's Cycle and Sports, both of which donated helmets for all ages.

Welland-Pelham Association for Community Living, Welland Fire and Emergency Services, The region's Emergency Medical Services, SUD Skates and McDonalds were all on site for Saturday's safety event.

"Sometimes kids – and even parents – don't understand the importance of a properly fitted helmet," Welland Coun. Barry Sharpe, who is a member of Safe Communities Welland steering committee, said. "We want to ensure that in addition to any financial constraints that might exist, we are also addressing the issue of education."

Swick-Janjac said each of the vendors had an important safety message for each participant.

"It's very important to get this message out to kids as they go into sporting activities," she added.

Those involved in the program launch have also agreed to be involved in other phases of the campaign.

"This is a community-sponsored event," she said.

Swick-Janjac also reminded the public that Safe Communities Welland is open to suggestions when it comes to other programs and initiatives that might help make the city a safer place.

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