



STAFF PHOTO

Elmer the Safety Elephant meets with children at the Niagara Safety Village, Sunday during the community launch of the Welland Safe Community Partnership. Hundreds of children and their families attended the event including Gage Genders, who pulls Elmer's trunk while Becky Marr, left, and Mary Petriw give him a hug.

Making Welland a safer place

■ WELLAND SAFE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED

TRIBUNE STAFF
WELLAND

In the coming months and years, Welland will become a safer place.

The Welland Safe Community Partnership was officially launched, Sunday, with a celebration at the Niagara Children's Safety Village.

And vice-chair Rick Demers said it was a chance to let the community know "what we're all about."

"We're trying to increase awareness and implement safety programs to enhance safety," Demers said.

Those programs, he said, will "enhance safety for children right up to seniors, and from the workplace to the neighbourhood."

As a result of their efforts, Demers hopes to see a community focused on

the safety of its residents, whether it's through better informing the public on safety issues, increased workplace safety initiatives for smaller businesses, or more "tangible things like warning signs" at the roadside.

Representatives of the Partnership committee also plan to have a presence at community events to help inform the public.

Part of the initiative focuses on using statistical information.

"Using that kind of information we try to pinpoint what's most critical to try to address what Welland's safety hazards might be."

Putting the program together was a huge undertaking.

In the months leading up to the program launch, Demers said they had "to recruit enough people to get going. It was crucial to obtain the necessary statistics and other information that allowed us to pinpoint the most critical hazards."

"Then the subcommittees have to decide what they think is most important within their framework."

The Safe Community Partnership is currently made up of five subcommittees focusing on things ranging from seniors issues, to work place safety.

And Demers said each of the subcommittees still need community assistance to make it happen.

Anyone interested in participating can contact the Safe Community Partnership chairman Pat Chiochio at 905-327-5030.

The Partnership also hopes to work with other community organizations to "help expand initiatives that are already in place."

Demers said the Safety Village was the perfect venue for the program's community launch. And holding it on the last day of Safe Kids Week was ideal timing.

"It all really tied in together," he said.

Hundreds of children and their families attended the Safety Village for the event, which featured special guests including Elmer the Safety Elephant and Spiderman.

"This is also a celebration of our designation of becoming a Safe Community."

Welland is one of only 50 Safe Communities across Canada, and the first in Niagara.

"We want this to be something that continues in operation for years to come."