



AMH Family Safety Fest May 22 Makes it Fun to Be Safe: Advance Appointments Required for Children to Receive Free Bike Helmet

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Safety and fun are the focus of Alton Memorial Hospital's fourth annual Family Safety Fest, to be held Saturday, May 22, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the hospital's Cancer Care Center parking lot (behind the Medical Office Building).

The event continues to grow each year. More than 600 people attended the Family Safety Fest in 2009 and more than 300 free bike helmets were given out. This year's event will include:

- Free bike helmets for pre-registered children ages 4 to 12, with helmets provided by the Helmets First organization led by Dr. Joseph Cangas, a pediatrician from Columbia, Ill. Helmet supplies are limited, so appointments must be made in advance by calling 1-800-392-0936. Volunteers will also be on hand to make sure the helmets are correctly fitted.
- A bicycle safety course for children ages 4 to 12 and conducted by staff members of the AMH Human Motion Institute. Children are encouraged to bring their bicycles to the event and a helmet must be worn on the course.
- A chance to win a free bike (one boys bike and one girls bike) from Medford Bicycle and Sporting Goods from Jerseyville.
- A fire truck to explore from the Alton Fire Department.
- A "Seatbelt Convincer" from the Illinois State Police, which simulates what it's like to hit a wall at 25 mph with and without a seatbelt.

- ARCH medical helicopter tours, based on helicopter availability and weather permitting.
- Free hot dog lunch served by the Bethalto Kiwanis beginning at 11 a.m.
- Piasa Martial Arts demonstration at noon.
- Display and sales of PopATot™, a portable activity center for babies invented by a local couple.
- Child ID kits, sponsored by Liberty Mutual Insurance.
- Healthy teeth information and giveaways from the SIUE School of Dental Medicine.
- Drawings for St. Louis Cardinals baseball tickets courtesy of Olin Credit Union.

Please register in advance for the Family Safety Fest (everyone who is attending) and a free helmet (ages 4-12) by calling 800-392-0936. In case of rain, the event would be moved inside to the hospital's Beeby Wing lobby and the cafeteria.

Carefree bike riding is a rite of passage in childhood — if it's done safely. Among Illinois children age 5 to 14 who were admitted to emergency rooms for bike injuries last year, 40 percent had injuries to their head or neck.

That's why wearing helmets while bike riding is so important, says Dr. Cangas, who started the non-profit Helmets First organization along with a Web site to promote bike safety (www.helmetsfirst.com).

"As a pediatrician, I've seen everything from scalp lacerations requiring staples to stays in the intensive care unit that have led to total devastation due to kids in bike accidents not wearing a helmet," Dr. Cangas says.

He says that children should never get on a bike, scooter, skateboard or skates without a helmet.

"As soon as kids are riding anything, they should put on a helmet, even if they're riding with parents or in pull carts," Dr. Cangas says. "Even a spill on a tricycle can lead to a devastating injury. But 85 percent of all bicycle-related head injuries could be prevented by a helmet. I advise parents to put the bike on a hook and only take it down once the helmet is on."

Dr. Cangas' expertise has also earned him the title of "the Helmet Doctor."

Bike Helmet Tips from the Helmet Doctor

- Expensive doesn't mean better. A \$4 helmet can be as safe as a \$100 helmet.

- Check the inside of the hel