

Head Cases

Rotary Club, Vermillion Medical Clinic Provide Bike Helmets To Second Graders

By David Lias david.lias@plaintalk.net

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Vermillion
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As he has in past years, Matthew Krell, M.D. brought a watermelon with him to Jolley School Friday afternoon, April 19, as an aide in his talk to second graders from both Jolley and St. Agnes Catholic School.

He didn't arrive in the school gym to discuss the importance of including watermelon and other fruits and vegetables in the students' diets, however.

He was there to talk about an activity common to every student — bike riding — and what can happen if one doesn't wear a bike helmet.

The students agreed with him that a scraped knee or an injury to an arm — things that are rather common and that most kids said they had experienced while bike riding — weren't too serious and healed quickly.

An injury to the head, however? That, the kids agreed, could have a more difficult outcome.

"We're at school all day and you're learning stuff and if you get a concussion, if you get a headache, that's a bad thing," he said as he began to describe a typical bike ride "where we're going really fast and we're not wearing a helmet and I go up in the air and here I go ..."

At this point, he tossed the watermelon a short distance in the air and everyone watched it land on the floor close to his feet.

The watermelon, now cracked and leaking, helped Krell, a pediatrician at the Vermillion Medical Clinic, deliver an important message to the Vermillion second graders last Friday.

"Look at this. We don't want our head to look like this. We want to protect our head," he said. "We want to wear a helmet whenever we ride our bikes."

The Vermillion doctor added that it's a good idea for students to wear helmets during other activities this spring and summer, including roller skating, roller blading or skateboarding.

"If you're going fast on wheels, we need to be wearing our helmets all of the time," Krell said. "When you get all of these today, I want to see all of you wearing them."



Vermillion Rotarian Kathy Chandler makes sure a Vermillion Second-grader's new bike helmet is fitted properly during the annual helmet give-away event, held Friday, April 19 at Jolley Elementary School.

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Talk

He was referring to boxes of bicycle helmets, all colored a bright yellow so they are easily visible to motorists. They were all ready to be unboxed and fitted on the heads of every second grade student in Vermillion.

"If I see you on a bike, I want to see you with a helmet on, okay?" he told the students. "I don't want to see you in the office because you cracked your head."

For the 29th year, the Vermillion Rotary Club and the Vermillion Medical Clinic joined forces to provide a free bike helmet to every second grader enrolled at Jolley Elementary School and St. Agnes Elementary School.

It's a tradition involving more than the fitting of new helmets on the noggins of second graders. Adult volunteers formed six stations in the Jolley gym, each offering a different bit of advice or a story of personal experience to point out not only safety tips to heed while riding a bike, but also how safety equipment, like a bike helmet, prevents serious injury.

Thomas Marshall and Craig Thompson, both of Vermillion, manned one of the stations.

"When should you wear your helmet?" Marshall asked the students, and he received a variety of answers from the second graders and most were correct: "When you're on wheels."

"Every time you're on your bicycle or on a skateboard or on roller skates, always wear your helmet, Marshall said. "What about the people who say, 'if you're in

your neighborhood, you're okay, because your neighborhood is safe?"

"No!" a student sharply replied.

"You're right, because even around your house or in your neighborhood, you can still get in an accident," he said. "There can be a pebble on the sidewalk, or a crack, or a dog runs out or something that can cause you to have an accident."

Marshall then introduced his friend and biking buddy Craig Thompson as living proof that, yes, accidents can happen in your neighborhood.

"Thomas and I ride outside a lot and I like to race my bike, so I go out and train in the country," Thompson told the students. "One day we went out last summer and I did 18 miles out in the country. We got back into town and I wanted to get two more miles so I had an even 20.

"I was riding around my neighborhood, just kind of taking it easy. I was looking off to the side and I quit paying attention and all of a sudden I looked down and the curb was there," he said.

Thompson said he hit the curb and went flying. He landed hard on his side and on his head.

"My head was fine because I had my helmet on, but I broke five ribs," he said. "I had to go to the hospital in an ambulance and that was not fun; it didn't feel good. Breaking any bone probably hurts, but breaking ribs really hurts; I can tell you that."

While at the emergency room, X-rays were taken of Thompson's head.

"They looked for concussions, they looked for fractures," he said, "and there were no fractures, no concussions. So, I didn't have anything to protect my ribs, but at least I protected my head. That's my story of why you should always wear a helmet."

Marshall saw Thompson's accident and told the students that it didn't look serious.

"It didn't look bad, he was really close to his house and he just tipped over," he said. "That's why you should always wear your helmet. You never know how bad an accident is going to be."

Marshall brought his bike to Jolley School and was also dressed in some of the clothing he normally wears during a bike ride, including his helmet, a brightly colored jacket and arm bands that light up at night so motorists can more easily see him.

His bike also features front and rear lighting so he is more visible to motorists, pointing out to the youth that

they should do more than wear a helmet to be safe while riding their bikes.

"You want to make sure that you're highly visible on your bike," Marshall said.

A February 2017 analysis in the "International Journal of Epidemiology" reviewed 40 separate studies and found helmet use significantly reduced the odds of head injury. They also found the odds of a fatal head injury to be lower when cyclists wore a helmet.

HealthyChildren.org, a website of the American Academy of Pediatrics, notes that about 26,000 kids go to emergency departments with head injuries each year. Wearing a helmet can decrease the risk of head injuries by about 85% and facial injuries by about 65% among bicyclists among both children and adults.

The organization offers these tips to parents and other adults to get kids to make helmet wearing a habit as they get on their bikes this spring and summer:

Establish The Helmet Habit Early

Have your children wear helmets as soon as they start to ride scooters or tricycles and if they are a passenger on the back of an adult's bike. If they learn to wear helmets whenever they ride something with wheels, it becomes a habit for a lifetime. It's never too late, however, to get your children into helmets.

Wear A Helmet Yourself

Children learn best by watching you. Whenever you ride your bike, put on your helmet. Plan bicycle outings during which all family members wear their helmets to further reinforce the message. The most important factor influencing children to wear helmets is riding with an adult who wears a helmet.

Talk To Your Children About Why You Want Them To Protect Their Heads

There are many things you can tell your children to convince them of the importance of helmet use. Bikes are vehicles, not toys. You love and value them and their intelligence and need to protect them. They can permanently hurt their brains or even die of head injuries. Most professional athletes use helmets when participating in sports. Bicycle racers are required to use them when racing in the United States and in the Olympics.

Let Your Kids Choose & Decorate Their Helmet

Let your child choose their own helmet. If they like the design, they are more likely to wear it. Just check the label to make sure the helmet meets the Consumer Product Safety Commission bicycle safety standards and that it fits correctly. Encourage them to decorate their helmet to express their individuality. Adding

reflective stickers and LED lights can also make it easier for drivers to see your child.

Reward Your Kids For Wearing Helmets

Praise them; give them special treats or privileges when they wear their helmets without having to be told.

Don't Let Children Ride Their Bikes Unless They Wear Their Helmets

Be consistent. If you allow your children to ride occasionally without their helmets, they won't believe that helmet use really is important. Tell your children

they have to find another way to get where they are going if they don't want to use their helmets.

Encourage Your Children's Friends To Wear Helmets

Peer pressure can be used in a positive way if several families in the neighborhood make helmet use a regular habit at the same time.

Remember

Head injuries can occur on sidewalks, on driveways, on bike paths, and in parks as well as on streets. You cannot predict when a fall from a bike will occur. It's important to wear a helmet on every ride.