

Lakewood Lines Up to Buckle Up

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The LCSW/Lakewood Shomrim in conjunction with the Ocean County Sheriff's Office and the Lakewood Police Department, held a car seat check event on Sunday in Ocean County Park.

Ocean County residents had the opportunity to have their boosters and car seats checked by certified child restraint techs to be sure they were properly installed in their vehicles and that their children were properly buckled in.

Karin Moser, administrative assistant at the Ocean County Sheriff's Office said, "With the help of 12 Child Protective Services (CPS) Technicians, we inspected a total of 98 child restraints per the 4 hours. The techs serviced six vehicles at a time. I think that is a record!"

Such a large crowd showed up to take advantage of this service, that at closing time there were still many people waiting. They were given private appointments for a later date.



Traffic & Safety Investigator Doug Higgins, Safe Kids Instructor and trained LCSW car seat tech inspecting car seat at event



LCSW members inside Command Center overseeing logistics at the Car Seat Check Event

Helmet Heroes

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injuries on an almost daily basis in this season.

Participating families thanked Helmet Heroes for the positive peer pressure the program yielded. Probably the best feedback we received was from last year's grand prize winner. She was absolutely thrilled with her brand new \$500 bicycle!

How have you further expanded the campaign this summer?

This year, we received enthusiastic encouragement from Lakewood Hatzolah, which gives me further *chizuk* to continue the program. We will be raffling off three grand prizes for children in three age brackets: ages 3-6, 7-12 and 13-18. I've computerized the program for an easier and more organized contest.

In addition to the three grand prizes, I raffle off a weekly bicycle accessory to children who have entered the contest. The first prize winner was a child who started putting on a helmet for the contest. He was ecstatic over his win! *Baruch Hashem*, hundreds of children have already signed up, and we are expecting to top last year's 600 entries.

The older a child is, the harder it can be to convince him or her to wear a helmet. How do you persuade children ages 13-18 to join Helmet Heroes?

I find that the statistics speak to teens. According to the U.S. Department of Transportation, 3/4 of fatal bike crashes involve a head injury, and 97% of bicyclists who died were not wearing a helmet. Those are frightening numbers.

A Hatzolah member told me about a call where a child without a helmet fell off his bike and hit the

curb. He cracked his skull in many places and was treated long-term in a hospital and rehabilitation center. This member encouraged me to get the word out to children and teens - he's seen first-hand the ramifications of not wearing a helmet.

Why do you think most people neglect wearing a helmet?

I believe parents don't recognize the importance of helmet safety. Children refuse to put on a helmet, especially during the hot summer months when it feels uncomfortable, and parents give up trying. I wish they'd know that just a fall on a sidewalk can cause a head injury.

It can be difficult to spearhead and run an entire program all on your own. What motivates you to continue spreading the Helmet Heroes message?

I volunteered in Children's Specialized, a rehab center in New Brunswick. Many of the patients are *frum* children who sustained head injuries. Some of these children were completely healthy before the accident and now, *R"l*, they cannot function normally. One child was no longer able to speak after he was hit by a car. It is unbelievable to see how devastating a head injury is.

This reality shook me up and prompted me to act. What keeps me going is that I know this campaign can save a life. Many mothers have encouraged me with their own personal stories. I'll share just one that has given me tremendous *chizuk*:

After much cajoling, a Lakewood mother persuaded her son to put on a helmet. This child's bike slammed into a rock and he fell off the bike backwards and hit the cement. His helmet smashed into pieces. The family hung the cracked helmet in their study as a reminder of Hashem's never-ending *chesed*.

To quote Dr. Shanik, who encourages Helmet Heroes, "Wearing a helmet while riding a bike is of utmost importance! Severity of head injury is remarkably decreased."

How can we change the helmet-less mindset in Lakewood?

In many locations, wearing a helmet is an accepted practice. For some reason it isn't part of the program in Lakewood. I think if every development and neighborhood enforces helmet safety it'll be commonplace throughout the town. We just need to hear the heavy-hitting statistics and parents will realize how serious helmet-wearing is: 48% of children 5-10 years of age who are hit by a car suffer a head injury.

Why are we waiting for an accident to happen? A head injury sustained from riding without a helmet is totally preventable! Camps, too, should be vigilant and enforce rules that campers or staff members who bike to camp must wear a helmet. No one wants the responsibility of a child getting hurt on their property! With time, the culture can change and wearing a helmet can become a life-saving habit.

This year the campaign is *l'iluy nishmas Moshe Moskowitz*. Can you tell us about that?

Moshe Moskowitz, *z"l*, of Baltimore was the youngest biker for Bike for Chai. He was only 13 when he was, *R"l*, killed in a car accident. I wanted to take the *zechus of v'nishmartem meod l'nafshoseichem* one step further for this year's campaign and execute it in someone's memory.

The Moskowitzes and I share a common friend, and the tragedy resonated deeply with me. I contacted the Moskowitz family and shared my wish to establish the campaign as an *aliyah* for their son's *neshamah*.

They were very appreciative and felt it was especially appropriate. Moshe was a professional biker who always wore a helmet. That's what I try and tell children: you want to be a real biker, wear a helmet!

How are you getting the Helmet Heroes message out to the public?

Helmet Heroes is a grassroots campaign, and I try to get the word out by being resourceful and creative. I've hung up flyers in pediatricians' offices and some stores, a few neighborhood boys hand out flyers, and I've advertised in local publications. Right now, I am working on bringing camp directors on board and sending out the Helmet Heroes contest through their camps.

Thank you, Mrs. Stavsky. It has been an inspiration to hear your passion for safety! Please share a final message with our readers.

As a community, we are proactive in ensuring that all children receive the best care in school and at home. Whether it is remedial help, therapy, a mentor or any service or assistance, we are there to make it happen.

Let's work together to ensure the safety of all Lakewood children, too. Summer is fun and our kids spend chunks of their time outdoors. Please don't be apathetic or make a bad decision that will *chas v'shalom* affect the rest of your life. Be your child's hero. Next time he runs outside and hops on his bike, hand him a helmet. It can very well save his life.

For more information and to sign up for Helmet Heroes please email helmetheroes88@gmail.com.

The extended deadline is until August 7. The grand raffle drawings will be held on August 31.