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Safe Kids Sonoma County Creates New Partnerships and A Strategic Plan

By:

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When you were a kid, did you ever suffer a major injury? Or have you ever taken a child to the emergency room? Unintentional injuries are the number one cause of death and hospitalization for kids. Most of these injuries occur from car crashes, falls, bicycle and pedestrian incidents, poisonings, and drowning. Many people think that injuries just happen and are part of life. However, most injuries are NOT accidents, but are preventable.

Safe Kids Sonoma County is a countywide coalition with the mission to prevent unintentional childhood injuries. Three action teams focus on the areas of child passenger safety, bicycle and pedestrian safety, and home safety. This year, Safe Kids Sonoma County took on a major planning project that strengthened the coalition. On May 9, 2006, the coalition held a Strategic Planning Retreat to create new partnerships and a four-year plan.

Safe Kids Sonoma County brought together new partners not previously involved in child safety. Many new representatives from hospitals and clinics, law enforcement, community organizations, and the Department of Health Services attended. In addition, the coalition invited the media, schools, and local policy makers to the table. Over 50 people attended the retreat and provided valuable input.

During the retreat, the coalition trained participants about injury prevention and captured their input in the strategic plan. Mary Maddux-Gonzalez, the County Health Officer, presented the latest childhood injury data and trends. Speakers trained the group on the philosophy of injury prevention and how to turn data into action. Armed with this knowledge, the participants met in groups to draft four-year plans for the coalition and each of its three action teams.

Each strategic plan outlines activities to achieve the coalition's or action team's goals for the next four years. The coalition's top priority is to create a more user-friendly and informative website accessible by parents and child care providers. Another top priority is to form an Executive Board to have more broad-based leadership for the coalition. Other goals include increasing fundraising efforts, expanding membership, educating policy makers to affect policy change, working more with the media.

Safe Kids Sonoma County is making great progress on the top priorities of its strategic plan. During the last nine months, the coalition has identified two volunteers who are developing the Safe Kids Sonoma County website. The site is scheduled to launch in the next few months. The address is: www.safekidssonomacounty.org. The Executive Board is slowly forming. The coalition identified coordinators for two of its three action teams and working with community partners to fill other positions such as chair, policy coordinator, and media coordinator.

The strategic planning retreat created new partnerships and a clear direction for the coalition. However new partners, sponsors, and volunteers are always welcome. Safe Kids Sonoma County meets on the second Wednesday of the month from 2-3 p.m.