

Consulting

Speaking

Anthony CV

Senior Providers

Press Room

Satisfied Clients

Case Studies

Products

Contact

Home

Profiles in Healthcare Marketing, January 1991
Wearing a Helmet Can Be Fun - a report on a special event that built community partnerships while helping to protect children.

BICYCLE SAFETY PROGRAM

Wearing a Helmet Can Be Fun

Every year, more than two million American children receive bicycles as gifts. And, every year, more than 400,000 of these children end up in hospital emergency departments.

But, to the chagrin of many pediatricians, only about 2% of all children wear a cycling helmet despite studies showing that helmets can reduce head injuries by 85%.

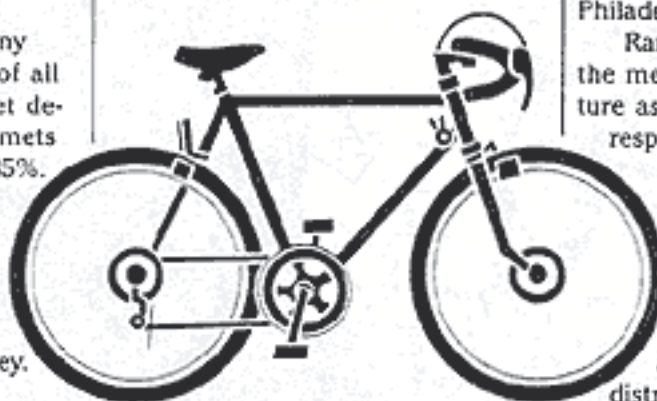
"Nearly two-thirds of all cycling deaths result from head injuries," says Stanley Karp, a pediatrician and staff member of Rancocas Hospital in Willingboro, New Jersey. "We could decrease the number of head injuries dramatically if more children—and adults—wore bicycle helmets."

Karp already had a supply of helmets on hand in his office to give to his young patients, but he still wasn't satisfied. That's why he enlisted the support of Rancocas Hospital in spreading the word.

With the help of Karp, Rancocas, a 318-bed community hospital near Camden, New Jersey, decided to organize a bicycle safety clinic.

"We put together a committee to set some goals for the program," says Anthony Cirillo, manager of marketing/communications. "While

Safety issues attract allies, kids, and parents.



increased helmet use was a key goal, we also wanted to create a fun environment for learning and an event which could attract a lot of community support."

Cirillo says the committee decided to focus on elementary school children ages five to twelve.

"We thought these kids would still be impressionable and open to suggestions about safety," he says. "And we figured children in this age range would naturally bring their parents along—people who would become additional advocates for helmet use."

Planning for the June event

began in early April. The hospital decided to sandwich the event between the last day of school and the Core States Bicycle Race—a major annual race in nearby Philadelphia.

Rancocas started with a letter to the medical staff over Karp's signature asking for support. Their response was strong and immediate. In fact, two staff physicians agreed to be speakers at the event.

Next, a letter went to all of the elementary and junior high schools in the area asking for permission to distribute fliers. The response was overwhelming, and Rancocas produced and distributed more than 15,000 promotional pieces.

All ten of the area's bicycle shops also received calls, and all but one contributed prizes to the event. In addition, two retailers asked to attend and sold more than 40 helmets at the Safety Day.

Local police departments pitched in also, and gave enthusiastic support. Three of the departments offered officers for the day to register bikes and conduct safety inspections.

What's more, Rancocas recruited both the local cable television company and the *Burlington County*

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