Neurosurgeons and ThinkFirst Partner in Helmet Event

Wear a helmet! This was the message ThinkFirst conveyed to both local Denver children and over 3,000 neurosurgeons visiting their city this past spring. On Sunday, April 10th, the ThinkFirst Foundation and the American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) collaborated on an exciting day of events to promote sports safety awareness. As both organizations held their annual conferences during the same week in Denver, ThinkFirst prevention educators and neurosurgeons from around the country seized the opportunity to teach children that learning to be safe can also be fun!

The first event was the ThinkFirst/AANS Community Kids Helmet Day held at INVESCO Field at Mile High Stadium. ThinkFirst chapters put their years of experience to work as they transformed the stadium into a safety fair for two hundred Denver elementary school children and their families. ThinkFirst educators trained members of the Young Neurosurgeons Committee how to correctly fit helmets at the 16 helmet-fitting stations. Children received a free bicycle helmet, participated in activities such as a brain toss and egg drop simulations, and spoke with ThinkFirst VIPs – Voices for Injury Prevention—and Street Smart, the Safety Super Hero, at the lively, hands-on learning stations throughout the fair.

A surprise visit by Denver Bronco quarterback Tim Tebow, delighted the crowd and had everyone's attention as he spoke about his own experience with a concussion, and how a helmet protected him from a more serious brain injury. He congratulated the children on wearing helmets and encouraged parents to do the same. Each child received a signed picture of Mr. Tebow as a remembrance of the event—and of his message. Thank you to the AANS, our generous sponsors, ThinkFirst participants and Board of Directors, the Young Neurosurgeons Committee, Tim Tebow and all who contributed to help us promote sports injury prevention awareness!

The ThinkFirst Foundation is offering a “Brain Bucket” bicycle helmet for donations of $100 or more through 2011—help commemorate our 25th year and help keep kids safe by donating today! Call 630-961-1400 for helmet requests.

Thank you to our Community Kids Helmet Day Sponsors:
Integra Foundation
Elekta
American Association of Neurological Surgeons
Barrow Neurological Institute
US Airways
ThinkFirst is 25! This year’s conference provided a wonderful way to celebrate all we have done, while fine-tuning our skills for the future. Chapter directors, physicians, VIP speakers, health educators and support staff shared program ideas as they heard presentations on a variety of pertinent topics. There was a strong focus on distracted driving, concussion, grant writing and VIP recruitment. ThinkFirst chapter directors shared their creative methods and expertise during a series of breakfast sessions, complimenting several invited guest speakers, including Dr. Don Gerber of Craig Hospital and Carol Gould, Colorado Department of Transportation.

Chapter personnel attending the pre-conference Chapter Training Day had the added benefit of participating in the Community Kids Helmet Day, where they worked with experienced chapters to learn best-practice methods for holding a helmet event in their own community.

One of the highlights of the conference was the ThinkFirst 25 Year Review! The gala evening recalled our accomplishments and recognized many, including our program originators, Dr. E. Fletcher Eyster and Dr. Clark Watts, our founders, the American Academy of Neurological Surgeons and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons and past Board member and sponsoring physician, Dr. Volker K.H. Sonntag. Please see the complete listing on this page for the 2011 Award recipients.

Thank you to the 22-member Conference Committee led by Kim Greene, ThinkFirst Vail Valley Medical Center, and Vicki Cassabaum, ThinkFirst Denver Metro, for making this a conference to remember!
ThinkFirst: Active in Washington, DC

ThinkFirst is committed to being involved on a national level with issues pertaining to injury prevention education. 2011 has been an exciting year for ThinkFirst in Washington:

January: National Coalition on Youth Sport Concussion. ThinkFirst participated in this day-long meeting, hosted by the American College of Sports Medicine and the NFL. The coalition is focused on the education and advocacy for youth sport concussion laws in order to improve the prevention, recognition and response to concussion in youth sports.


May 11-12: National Organizations for Youth Safety (NOYS). ThinkFirst featured our Teen and Youth programs at a booth on Capitol Hill for National Youth Traffic Safety Month, and participated in the NOYS coalition sessions.

October 3: ThinkFirst 25 Year Review!, Washington, DC. While in Washington for the Congress of Neurological Surgeons Annual Meeting, ThinkFirst will hold an educational forum to celebrate 25 years of injury prevention – meet the Board and people behind the scenes!

October 17-18: NOYS Distracted Driving Summit and Coalition Meeting. Debby Gerhardstein will be a featured presenter, providing an overview of our programs to national government, corporate and youth leaders.

ThinkFirst Executive Director Debby Gerhardstein with the Honorable Norman Y. Mineta, Chairman, Make Roads Safe North America and US Member, Commission for Global Road Safety, and Grover, Sesame Street’s Road Safety Ambassador.

Make a Difference Day: October 22, 2011

The ThinkFirst Foundation is one of seven locally-based nonprofits chosen to be part of Naperville, Illinois’ Make a Difference Day! Each nonprofit was asked to request an item for residents to donate, as a way of helping others. ThinkFirst will be collecting reams of copy paper for office use, as well as used cell phones, which will be sold to support distracted driving educational materials. If you have used cell phones taking up drawer space that you’d like to donate to a good cause, please drop them off on Saturday, October 22, from 9 to noon at Whole Foods, 2607 W. 75th Street, Naperville, or mail to: ThinkFirst Foundation, 1801 N. Mill Street, Suite F, Naperville, IL 60563. Last year 3 million people nationwide participated in this national day of helping others, sponsored annually by USA Weekend Magazine. Involve your family or office by helping ThinkFirst Make a Difference!
2011 VIP of the Year: Chad Burton

In December 1992, Chad Burton was driving two friends home after high school wrestling practice, when a drunk driver hit them head-on. Since Chad was unbelted, he flew forward, hitting his head and shattering the windshield. A traumatic brain injury left him in a coma for nearly 5 ½ weeks. The right side of his brain was injured causing him to lose control of the left side of his body.

After months of rehabilitation, Chad learned to deal with partial paralysis, and became a speaker for ThinkFirst Missouri. Since 1993, he’s spoken to thousands of children, teens and adults throughout the state and was featured in the ThinkFirst film, On The Edge. Chad’s message is simple: “No matter where you are going or what you do, if you’re late, there’s no sense speeding. It’s not worth risking your life or someone else’s.” He is a strong believer in seat belts and tells everyone “there are a lot of things you can die from, but don’t die because you didn’t take four to five seconds to put your seat belt on.”

2011 Chapter of the Year: ThinkFirst Central DuPage Hospital

ThinkFirst Central DuPage Hospital (TF CDH) was established in 1990, and is the State Chapter for Illinois. The CDH injury prevention team, led by chapter director Jill Braselton, RN, consists of three part-time staff and five VIP (Voices for Injury Prevention) speakers. Health educators and VIPs average 160 teen presentations each year, reaching more than 5,300 high school students with the ThinkFirst For Teens program and 6,000 fourth-eighth graders with ThinkFirst For Youth.

For each elementary school participating in the chapter’s ThinkFirst For Kids program, the team returns to provide a helmet fitting day at the school. With the support of corporate and community sponsors, the chapter is able to provide a free bicycle helmet to each first grader at participating schools. The chapter provides more than 2,350 helmets to children each year through this cooperative program.

TF CDH is funded in part by a grant from the Illinois Department of Transportation, which has also allowed them to develop a booster seat program, educating parents and distributing for just five dollars to low income families. During the first two years of this project they distributed 445 boosters to children in need. With all combined school and community programs for the award year, TF CDH reached over 16,000 people!

As the ThinkFirst State Chapter and Training Center for Illinois, TF CDH communicates between all eight Illinois Chapters with quarterly conference calls and a yearly ThinkFirst Illinois workshop, working together to help children in Illinois reduce their risk for injury.

Congratulations, and thank you for all you do, ThinkFirst CDH!