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ThinkFirst: Philanthropy in Action



The ThinkFirst National Injury Prevention Foundation is a philanthropic organization, using donations and grants to develop preventative programs that are provided as free community outreach programs. ThinkFirst's mission is to prevent brain, spinal cord, and other traumatic injuries through education, research, and advocacy. They provide a way for all of us to be involved in teaching people – children through older adults – how to lower their risk for traumatic injury, one of the leading causes of death worldwide.

It is estimated that more than 1.7 million people experience a traumatic brain injury every year in the U.S. and thousands suffer spinal cord injuries. In fact, injury is the leading cause of death among people between the ages of 1 and 44.

ThinkFirst's name is derived from a simple message that thinking first to take simple actions, such as wearing a seat belt, driving sober and without distractions, wearing bike and sports helmets, and other safety precautions, can significantly reduce the chances of injury from vehicle crashes, violence, falls, and sports.

Supported by grants, donations, and member dues, ThinkFirst seeks to get at the root of the high incidence of injuries and has established a global presence. It has 140 chapters in the United States as well as 36 chapters in other countries. It got its start in 1986 when The American Association of Neurological Surgeons (AANS) and the Congress of Neurological Surgeons (CNS) directed two neurosurgeons, E. Fletcher Eyster, MD, of Pensacola, Florida and Clark Watts, MD, JD, of Columbia, Missouri to develop a national injury prevention program based on their previous prevention efforts in their respective communities.

Working closely with its chapters and injury prevention professionals based in hospitals and other health centers, ThinkFirst offers a range of educational programs aimed at helping people, especially those most at risk—children, teens, young adults, and older adults—learn to reduce their risk for life-altering injuries or death.

For young children, Street Smart, the Safety Hero, teaches them in a fun way about the basics of preventing injuries. As with all ThinkFirst programs, they learn about the brain and spinal cord, but with age-appropriate tools such as a gelatin brain and helmet fittings.

Because traumatic injuries are the leading cause of death among teens, ThinkFirst has a big focus on reaching the vulnerable populations of middle and high school students. Through its VIP speakers, Voices for Injury Prevention, it brings compelling first-person presentations into classroom. Speakers who've had an injury share their personal stories, explaining how an unsafe decision could change your life forever.

ThinkFirst also offers several programs that can be offered at hospitals or clinics. Protecting infants from injuries caused by SIDS, acquired head trauma, improper car seat use and household hazards is a program for expectant parents called ThinkFirst For Your Baby. ThinkFirst To Prevent Falls is an introductory class for older adults and ThinkFirst About Concussion is presented to athletic groups and other audiences.

ThinkFirst is continually expanding and perfecting programs to encourage everyone to support injury prevention . . . by making safe choices, teaching injury prevention or supporting ThinkFirst through your own philanthropic giving. Learn how at www.thinkfirst.org. ■