

WILDOMAR: Bike safety learned by all

## Wildomar event teaches children ways to stay safe on a bike

By NELSY RODRIGUEZ - Staff Writer | Saturday, May 10, 2008 4:52 PM PDT ∞



Riley Olson of Cub Scout troop 332 in Wildomar stops fellow cub scout Jacob Edwards at the traffic safety course Saturday in the Elks Lodge parking lot. (STEVE THORNTON/Staff photographer)



Even simulated railroad crossings were part of the bike safety course Saturday. (STEVE THORNTON/Staff photographer)



Jeff Kimura of A.J.'s Bikes in Lake Elsinore runs several bicycles through a safety check as part of the bike safety program Saturday in the Elks Lodge parking lot. (STEVE THORNTON/Staff photographer)

WILDOMAR ---- Somewhere among the giggles and chatter of children zooming around on their bikes, lessons were being learned.

One boy called a few kids walking in front of him "pedestrians." Another dropped his right arm to signal he was about to stop.

That's all they could hope for at the Wildomar Cub Scout Pack 332 Bicycle Safety Event held Saturday in the parking lot of the Elks Lodge on Mission Trail.

"Hopefully it will sink in," said Sheri Possehl, the mother of 15-year-old Jessie James Possehl, who died in July after he was struck while he was riding his bike by a hit-and-run driver. "It might not sink in today, but maybe they'll go to another (safety) event and remember."

By noon, about 70 children ages 6 to 12 had registered with event coordinators. They had their bikes tuned up, received free helmets, learned safety tips and even practiced their new skills on an obstacle course that simulated a busy city street.

"It's great," Scott Sandler of Hemet said after his 9-year-old son, Joel Sandler, demonstrated his knowledge of hand turn signals, earning himself a California Highway Patrol sticker. "As a kid I bashed my head into the concrete a bunch of times because we didn't wear helmets back then."

As children registered themselves at a Cub Scout booth, their bicycles were taken to a maintenance stand where Anthony Mejia, manager of AJ's Bikes in Lake Elsinore, and others checked each bike for loose joints, low tires, bad breaks and missing reflectors.

"If your brakes aren't working, you're not going to stop," Mejia said of the most common problem he'd found on bikes that day ---- faulty brakes.

Meanwhile, the children moved to the Inland Empire Health Plan booth where each was given a new ruby-colored helmet, which was later fitted to their heads.

"You see kids all the time trying to be cool wearing their (helmets) backward, but it's not going to work that way," said Marci Aguirre, community outreach manager with the Inland Empire Health Plan. "Just because your head is covered, if you were to fall (the helmet) would actually move ---- you're talking about brain damage."

April Hueftle, committee chairwoman for the Cub Scout pack, said Jessie Possehl suffered too much bodily damage during the accident, but because he was wearing a helmet he survived long enough to say good-bye to his family.

Children at the event were shown the heavy gear that the toughest bikers wear. Darren Steensma, a race team manager with Mountain Cycle in Murrieta, showed off the knee, shin and chest pads and thick helmets that he and other down-hill bikers wear as they're flying downhill over rocks and drops at up to 60 miles per hour.

And they were told by a CHP officer key things to remember as they ride their bikes,

such as continually moving their heads to see what's around them, and working as a team with their friends as they ride in packs, warning each other of dangers that they encounter.

The information was sinking in with Joel Sandler.

"I haven't tried out my new one," Sandler said of the new red helmet he carried in a bag. But he had learned "how to stay on the right side of the street, to go with traffic and hand signals."

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