



NATIONAL
**CHILD PASSENGER
SAFETY BOARD**

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Contact: Jessica Butterfield
National Child Passenger Safety Board Secretariat
Program Manager, National Safety Council
Jessica.Butterfield@nsc.org

Clare Pfothenauer Receives Child Passenger Safety Instructor of the Year Award
Illinois Traffic Safety Liaison Recognized for Work through Rush Copley and IDOT

ITASCA, IL – During her first week on the job as an Illinois State Trooper, Clare Pfothenauer was assigned to handle a rollover crash. She recalls hearing the frantic voice of a tow truck driver calling for help on the scene. Something was stuck under the dash, preventing him from engaging the driveshaft.

“The last thing I expected was to find a baby,” Pfothenauer said. “No car seat, no diaper bag, nothing in or around the vehicle to indicate there could have been a child on board. This vision has always resonated in my mind. I knew I had to educate the general public and my fellow troopers about checking for children.”

Pfothenauer’s passion for child passenger safety was born at 2:45 a.m. on the side of the road that day. Today, she is one of two recipients of the National Child Passenger Safety Instructor of the Year award, presented by the [National Child Passenger Safety Board](#). The award is sponsored by [Toyota Motor North America](#).

Pfothenauer, a resident of Lemont, Ill., is being singled out for her work as the child passenger safety coordinator for Rush Copley Medical Center, a grant-funded position supported by the Illinois Department of Transportation. After retiring from the state police, she took the reins as traffic safety liaison in Region 2, which encompasses a large part of Cook County, outside the Chicago city limits, and many of the surrounding collar counties.

In 2022, she worked with a team of six CPS instructors to provide the following Technician training opportunities:

- 12 certification classes and one hybrid class
- Five CPS certification renewal classes
- 12 skills building classes for Technicians to earn their CEUs

She also touched the general public in a variety of ways, including:

- Assisting with the introduction of CPS classes for parents and caregivers at social service agencies and encouraging agency staff member to become Technicians
- Distributing car seats to low-income families and providing assistance with installation
- Offering education and car seat installation assistance during checkup events at Rush Copley Medical Center in Aurora

“Clearly, Clare is all about keeping children safe,” National Child Passenger Safety Board Chair Jennifer Pelky said. “She is there for parents and caregivers. She also works with CPS Technicians and Instructors all the time to help them improve their skills and fulfill their recertification requirements. The words people use to describe her tell the story of her commitment to make a difference in the world – compassionate, kind, caring.”

When car seat check activities were limited during COVID, Pfothenhauer received permission to offer Instructor sign-offs during Technician training classes in Illinois. She increased recertification rates in Region 2 from 38.3% in 2020 to 50.4% in 2021. She leads a diverse team of CPS Instructors that includes a handful of first-responders, an emergency nurse and in-home mother.

Her inclusionary model is in keeping with the CPS Code of Conduct and in lockstep with research that shows work environments that embrace diversity are safer. Once, Clare was the rookie who was told to “figure it out” on the side of the road. Now, she is happy to share her CPS experience with others and more committed than ever to road safety.

Pfothenhauer and her husband, Jeff, live in Chicago’s southwest suburbs with their dog, Stella. They have raised two sons, Joshua and Colin. When not at work, Clare enjoys listening to music, going for walks, visiting friends and hanging out with family members.

About the National Child Passenger Safety Board

The National Child Passenger Safety Board’s mission is to save lives and prevent injuries by promoting child passenger safety through education, mentorship, engagement and innovation. The Board’s work is managed by the National Safety Council. For more information about child passenger safety or the National CPS Board, please visit the Board’s website at www.cpsboard.org