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Safe Kids Western North Carolina Selected as Team of the Year

They Don't Count Hours or Minutes, But They Do Count on Each Other to Make a Difference

ITASCA, IL – If you're not sure what a "can-do" attitude looks like, then you haven't met the child passenger safety team at Safe Kids Western North Carolina.

The team is headed by two Child Passenger Safety Technician Instructors: Beverly Hopps and Vickie Killough. After a recent Instructor meeting six hours from their home office and still staring at a long ride home, the two arranged for team members to meet a family in the hotel parking lot where they were gathered. Beverly, Vickie and others jumped to assist with an adaptive restraint for a child. No questions asked.

That's one example of how they "can" and "do" serve parents and caregivers in 16 primarily rural counties with populations ranging from 8,000 to 300,000. Child poverty rates rank above the state average in 13 of those counties. Their service-over-self mantra is another reason why Safe Kids Western North Carolina is saluted today as the National Child Passenger Safety Team Year. The award is presented by the [National Child Passenger Safety Board](#) and sponsored [Toyota Motor North America](#).

"It has been said that a successful team is one of many hands and one mind," National Child Passenger Safety Board Chair Jim Savage said. "That's exactly how you would describe this team. They've been in the safety business for more than 20 years. They continue to seek out new partners and find new ways to deliver CPS education. They are to be applauded."

The depth and scope of Safe Kids Western North Carolina's work speaks for how it continues to rejuvenate itself and reach others. In the last 18 months, the team has:

- Conducted 11 certification classes and five renewal classes, resulting in 182 new Child Passenger Safety Technicians and 77 returning Technicians
- Offered eight days of CEU education for 111 Technicians
- Educated 100 transit bus drivers in five counties on CPS law and best-practice transportation procedures

- Taught basic car seat education to Department of Social Services employees in two counties
- Provided CPS educational materials to pediatric offices, school nurses, library personnel and program representatives serving migrant workers, teen parents and low-income families
- Assisted hundreds of families with car seat education specific to their child, vehicle and car seat, much of this done through car seat checkup events and through consultations with families of children with special transportation needs

Safe Kids Western North Carolina also leads the CPS Diversion Program in its region of the state. The program allows people who have been issued a ticket for incorrectly restraining a child to receive education, instead of paying a fine.

As Vickie Killough says, you don't know what you don't know. Killough shares a personal story of how she came to grasp the importance of child passenger safety education – by seeking answers to her questions.

“I was working at a large child development center and questioned whether our transporting of children was appropriate and safe,” she said. “I found out about Safe Kids WNC and the CPS certification program and signed up to take the course. Quickly, I realized we were not transporting children safely and, as a nanny, I was not transporting children safely in my personal vehicle.

“Once I was certified, I started volunteering with Safe Kids WNC and eventually took a job with the organization as an Injury Prevention Specialist. I have been an educator and specialist for 20 years now.”

Killough and Hopps regularly work with three other CPS Instructors: Mark Dillingham, Carla Ball and Charlene Proctor.

“I started out working with the coalition that was then-led by our local children's hospital as a grant administrator and secretary,” Hopps said. “My youngest son was 3 years old at that time, and I quickly learned I had made some mistakes with his car seats. I felt then that I wanted to be an advocate for children and their caregivers to know the importance of a properly used car seat for their child.”

The team has steadily grown from its inception in 1994. Today, Safe Kids Western North Carolina has a total of five CPS Instructors with a combined 60-plus years of CPS experience. They mentor 121 Technicians and regularly lead Safe Transportation for All Children classes. In short, they “can” and “do” make a difference on a daily basis.

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