

I am back in Maryland, for a day, and I want to thank you for participating in and supporting some terrific field efforts. We were able to reach early childhood professionals, law enforcement officers, first responders, families, and others, with updated and captivating events. That is all thanks to your efforts, funding and encouragement!

The first key to reducing the 217 deaths and 9,470 injuries on Montana roadways is to get everyone buckled up. Even in cases of impaired driving, aggressive driving, distracted driving, careless driving and speeding, seat belts and child restraints are effective. The second key is to get people to buckle up *correctly*, which is far more difficult but also crucial. Nearly 1,300 of the Montana injuries were incapacitating, changing the lives of those affected on a long-term if not lifelong basis. While Montana's laws require both of the keys, too many people are not using or not correctly using restraints.

How do we start changing that before Montana's laws are improved to reflect Nature's laws? Grassroots efforts! Show the the hard-hitting facts to leaders, and empower them to spread the word in their communities. And that is just what we worked on, with your help.

Safe Childcare Transport classes in Billings and Miles City reached out to early childhood professionals who regularly transport kids. Family Support Network mandated attendance and participation in hands-on practice, for staff and for volunteers. Human Resource Development Council had a great turnout from their staff, at a separate class, and welcomed attendees from elsewhere. Individual providers and foster parents enthusiastically participated in a Miles City class. And our participation in the Northwest Indian Head Start Coalition Conference, with a modified version of the course, was welcomed and received good evaluations.

A multi-agency class was also drawn together in Hardin (thanks Mark!), and ended up being about more than curbside enforcement and education. Officers, first responders, and other members of the DUI Task Force joined together for two hours of shared learning. Some were even repeat attendees from our other courses – and wanted more. The county may end up with more certified technicians, to serve the area's needs, as a result!

And while all of the classes served professional *and* personal needs, a very exciting part was participating in the Crow Fair. With the beautiful traditions and pride in heritage we saw, combined with the much higher likelihood of roadway deaths for Native Americans, it was an honor to work with families on preserving life and health! Through the help of Trooper Rhodes (thanks Mike!) and Cosco (thanks for donating several seats!), Patty and I were able to inspect child seats, have the appropriate types available when necessary, and provide important education to those who took advantage of it. All attendees learned a lot – both adults and children – and several even made donations to help provide seats for future events.

As usual, the photos tell the story better than I do. Take a look at the attached, and you will see what I mean. A special thanks to Patty Carrell and all who worked with her to make success happen, to HMHB and State Farm Insurance for supporting and funding the week, and to all of the partners and supporters of the projects!

Until September –  
Joe

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