

Subject: Thanks for making a difference!

Good afternoon, everyone! I am back in Maryland, as of early this morning, and I want to share the week of educating that we just completed. It was full of meeting and working with terrific people – the ones who really care about protecting themselves, the people they transport, and families in their communities. The experience was exhilarating, yet humbling.

During the six days of training and meeting, *Safe Childcare Transport: Protecting the Kids and Yourself* was brought to Kalispell, Libby, Plains, Thompson Falls, Polson and Ronan. Most of the participants took the class in their own communities, which will undoubtedly increase the potential for advocacy, structured improvements, and expanded reach. Words can't do justice to how energizing such progress is.

One amazing result was that many participants, including some state legislators, identified a vast difference between current legislation and the laws of physics. As they learned the facts about development and kinematics, watched a number of crash videos, and applied the concepts to the real world, we heard *them* comment that appropriate occupant protection laws are effective educational tools. More than one policymaker spoke of how uninformed personal choices place a burden on all other tax-paying citizens, and of how laws can give everyone the information needed to make good choices. The discussions were compelling to listen to!

Another great result was the interest in more awareness and education. Written and verbal evaluations stated that this course should be strongly promoted to everyone who transports children, and even required for those who work in childcare, Head Start transportation, family services, foster parenting, school transportation, and more. Some, including Representative Gordon Hendrick, even committed to attending a 4-day class and become certified child passenger safety technicians. They indicated that adults, children and those who work in family-oriented professions need more local expert resources than are currently available – and that they will commit their time to help fill that need.

The handouts that were created specifically for this course were also a big hit. Many of the participants indicated that *4 Steps to Safety* and *Keep Everyone Safe on the Road* will be laminated and posted, as well as copied and distributed to families. I have attached PDF copies of the documents, in case you haven't seen them, and I understand that they will soon be available for download from www.hmhb-mt.org. While they are seen as effective stand-alone pieces, they become even more useful for those who have attended the training.

Thank you for all of your hard work at making this week a success – helping more Montana families stay alive, healthy and injury-free. And a special thanks to Patty Carrell, Bette Hall-Munger, and the rest of the HMHB team, for creating and implementing this program – and certainly to MDOT, for sponsoring this week. The direct teamwork between local leaders, local community members, and statewide representatives is so effective for making good things happen! And thank you to the certified technicians and instructors, who came to the CEU-approved class and also helped with the hands-on portions.

As always, I have attached a photo essay of the week. It tells the story better than anything I could type. Please let me know if you could use higher resolution versions, of any of the pictures, for media, websites, newsletters, internal promotion, etc. I have blind-copied all of the state legislators who publish e-mail addresses but whose communities were not visited in February, as well as the rest of the SKSC coordinators. Since they will all be invited to participate in classes, as the statewide training program reaches more of Montana, knowing about it will help each decide whether to prioritize his or her attendance.

Keep up the great work –

Joe

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