

Subject: THANK YOU!

Hello Everybody!

I'm back in Maryland, after a busy and productive week in Montana. Winter weather held off, for the most part, allowing us to launch important occupant protection programming and two new curricula. It was quite clear, throughout the week, that we are building on the energy created by your 2006 Crash Injury & Healthcare work. I am certain that the 2007 outreach effort will have a more direct and expansive impact on the safety of Montana families. We provided local training in Sydney, Glendive, Miles City and Billings, during the first phase, and we also provided a 2-hour occupant protection course for 51 law enforcement academy students (now part of Basic Training). As Lorelle Demont so eloquently said, this week, the new program "is laying a foundation in the minds of many people that will yield good results in the realm of OP in Montana in the days and months ahead."

For those of you who haven't been involved yet, the new parts of the program are a bit more intense than Crash Injury & Healthcare. There is more concrete information, for law enforcement professionals and for medical first-responders, and there is a hands-on component to reinforce the information with real experience. Student evaluations and assessments, as well as coordinator feedback, have been high. Some influential attendees, during the debut tour, have indicated that the program needs to reach ALL law enforcement and first-responder personnel, and they have even suggested plans to work on making that a reality. Other attendees have talked about how they plan to more actively enforce OP laws, look for ways to make families more aware of the need for correct restraint, refer community members to inspection resources, and pay more attention to emergency transport practices.

All of this early success is due to your hard work and cooperation to make these classes and relationships happen. You are all outstanding! Sure, we faced a few challenges... getting large numbers of people to participate in something brand new... getting vehicles and car seats to a central location for hands-on practice... a couple of A/V challenges... but we overcame all of them together. The bottom line is that the classes generated more individual and agency awareness and commitment, and that important partnerships are being created or rejuvenated. And now that we have overwhelming positive response and more familiarity with the lay of the land, we can work together to make future weeks even more successful than the first! Not only that, but student questions and feedback are giving us tools to further enhance the curricula.

I know that I've said this before, but I can't get over how well members of the Montana advocate community work together. I think Patty Carrell, Bette Hall-Munger, and the rest of the HMHB team have done a phenomenal job obtaining funding, organizing the big picture, communicating with local organizers, being on-site to provide support, communicating with attendees about their new roles, and much more. And I know that every one of the local coordinators has done amazing things to plan and facilitate the trainings, bring local partners together, get the right people to participate, ensure availability of information/resources, and attend to many important but often overlooked details. The result has been smooth sailing and a lot of enthusiastic graduates who can help keep families safer. Now the real work of following up and taking advantage of the momentum begins...

Thank you for all you have done and are doing to save lives and prevent injuries. And thank you for the opportunity to be a part of your team! I have attached a few of the better photos, taken during the first tour of 2007.

Keep being terrific!

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