

**Subject:** Thanks for the fantastic week!

Good afternoon, awesome team members!

I am back in my Maryland office, reflecting on what a great week it has been for the Montana families you touch. The communities you are part of are in a much better place for keeping members safe. That's all thanks to you, your undying commitment to making things better, and your hard work! You have engaged community leaders and the partners that work with families every day, and you have given folks a better opportunity to practice and carry lifesaving messages. And I'm sure you will continue to support them through your programs, coalitions and resources.

The bulk of the week was spent in Pondera, Toole & Teton Counties, and started out with a half-hour radio show where Patty Carrell and I were able to give listeners a glimpse. It was a great way to give folks the protective guidance, directly, knowing that it would be reinforced by the police officers and first responders we would later work with. We then went to a special SKSC luncheon, and met community leaders from EMS, police, hospital, school, church and other committed agencies – along with great volunteers and even the mayor. I have to say that Jackie and Cynthia were amazing, throughout our time in their area, and that Carl (Jackie's husband) enthusiastically played a supportive role in everything we did!

We worked to educate officers and emergency personnel, in Shelby, Conrad and Choteau, over the first few days, and I was amazed by the turnout and team spirit. We heard a lot of brainstorming about involving kids in the process of educating families, knowing that 5- to 10-year-olds have a major influence on how they and their families ride. They can easily understand that keeping belts or straps snug on strong parts of the body is much better than having them loose on soft parts – or not using them at all – and they can help “encourage” adult family members to make the right choices for ALL riders. We heard more commitment to enforcing laws, and that the reasons for proper restraint were better understood by these key partners, and also of actively seizing opportunities to educate, refer, review policies, and get more training. And I think that one of the keys to success, in these communities, is that lots of colleagues attended together – and that their bosses directly participated in the training.

Then it was off to Great Falls, where we started out with a TV crew and began packing in first responders from Cascade County. This training was wonderful, thanks to great work from Mary Kay and Carol, because it brought seasoned occupant protection leaders together with first-timers. Not only could we meet the continuing education needs and answer questions from those who are already involved, but we all teamed up to build commitment among new advocates. And then it was off to the law enforcement offices, where we had an excellent representation from troopers in the area. One officer had recently attended a similar course, which we conducted during her basic training, and she really wanted to be there and to learn more! It seems like advocacy and enforcement will be high, in that area, since the Captain heard good comments and personally thanked us for providing the training.

We topped it all off, in Helena, where Governor Schweitzer, Senator Cooney, MDT Director Lynch and I had a chance to speak to TV and print media representatives about education and legislation, as well as about the laws of physics and proper restraint use. Lithia Chevrolet provided a venue for a terrific press conference, through a lot of great work by Patty and Tracie, and then for a Safe Kids Buckle Up event where the kids left much safer than they arrived. Patty, Bette and Jess from HMHB, Tracie and a couple of local folks, and Pam and Lorelle from MDT were all working to make that a reality – and we were all able to engage the community through two hours of onsite radio broadcast. Some were first-time checkup workers, and I imagine that scribing, listening and helping provided for even more leadership insight.

Thanks for your great work and all that you will do to build on it further. We all also owe a special thanks to HMHB, MDT and the other state leaders, for their active support and direct hands-on help. I can't get over how much more successful programs that involve direct access to state leaders and resource providers are than those that do not. I'll let some pictures tell you more (attached), and you will even see some of the folks that the 2-hour trainings assisted in personal protection. Please feel free to share the

slideshow with participants, community leaders, colleagues, bosses, webmasters, etc., if appropriate or useful. I have higher resolution versions of each photo, if you need or want one or more.

Thanks again!  
Joe

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