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Health News From Cleveland County HealthCare System

BE A FIRE BUSTER

Safe Kids sparks an interest in fire safety

By PAULA VESS
Regional Marketing Group

SHELBY – We've all heard the expression "An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure." That statement holds true in health care as well. The best kind of illness or injury is the one you never have to treat.

That's why Cleveland County HealthCare System (CCHS) and the Safe Kids Cleveland County Coalition have been setting up the Safety Zone at the Cleveland County Fair for the last eight years. Targeting our youngest citizens, the volunteers who work in the house each night of the fair teach children about safety – at home, at play, in and around cars, on bicycles and more.



"When we first started in 2002 we were fortunate to work with a modular home contractor who set up a model home for us at the fair grounds. We used it to show how to childproof a home, but it wasn't interactive, parents and children simply walked through," said Judy Hawkins, RN, co-coordinator of Safe Kids Cleveland County Coalition. "After about two years we decided we needed a game, something interactive. So, we came up with the Wheel of Safety game and have created several other interactive games over the years."

This year's theme is on fire safety. Children are taught how to "Be a Fire Buster." Within the Safety Zone building several different "rooms" are set up to resemble a typical home. There is a kitchen, den, bedroom, bathroom and a utility/storage room. Each room contains fire hazards that children and their parents are asked to find.

"Safety Zone is designed to ap-



PHOTOS COURTESY OF SAFE KIDS CLEVELAND COUNTY

Shelby Fire Marshal Ray Beck talks with children about what a firefighter wears during a fire, and tells them if there's a fire, to never hide from a firefighter.

peal to kids," said Joan Mabry, RN, co-coordinator of Safe Kids Cleveland County Coalition, "but it's often the parents who learn the most. Any three-year-old can probably tell you to stop, drop and roll if their clothes are on fire because they've heard a TV character sing about it."

As the children and their parents walk through the house, they look for potential hazards such as candles burning too close to curtains, frayed electrical cords, hot appliances too close to flammable material, and non-working smoke alarms. "The kids are given a light and are asked to shine it on anything they think is a hazard," said Mabry. "We have volunteers at each station to point out anything they miss."

"Child and parent can work

together," said Hawkins. "The parents come through with them. Sometimes we'll hear a parent say 'I need to fix that' when they realize they have that same hazard at home."

In the last room of the house a volunteer sounds a smoke alarm and teaches children and parents what to do if there is a fire in their home. They learn to 'get low and go.' Volunteers also explain that families should always have a meeting place picked out, like under a tree away from the house.

In addition to all the education about finding fire hazards and learning what to do in case of fire, the Safety Zone also teaches children not to be afraid of fire fighters. Because all the gear a firefighter wears into a burning

house can make them look scary to a child, volunteers in the Safety Zone explain what all that gear is for and that they shouldn't be afraid. The firefighters are there to help them; they should never hide from a firefighter.

About 1,500 children and 2,000 adults walked through the Safety Zone at last year's fair.

"What makes this work is doing it in conjunction with other agencies and businesses like the fire department and Lowe's, and of course because of our volunteers" said Mabry. "We couldn't open the doors without the volunteers."

WANT TO GO? The Safety Zone will be open during all 10 days of the fair. Hours are: 6:00 – 8:00 p.m. on weekdays and 1:00 – 6:00 p.m. on weekends.

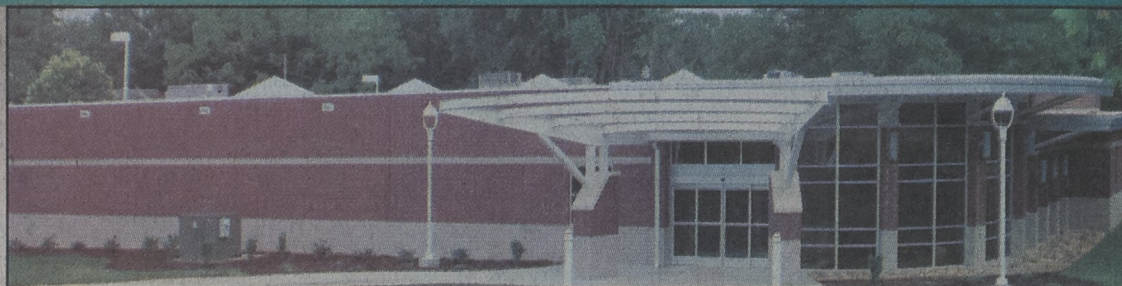
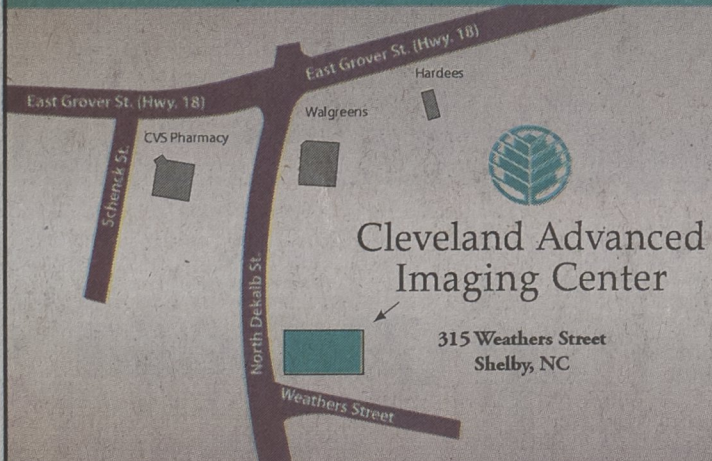


Amy Hamilton explains fire dangers in the simulated kitchen and ways to avoid accidentally starting a fire.

SAFE KIDS CLEVELAND COUNTY COALITION MEMBER AGENCIES

- Carter Chevrolet
- City of Shelby Planning Office
- Childcare Connections
- Cleveland County Boys and Girls Club
- Cleveland County EMS
- Cleveland Co. Health Department
- Cleveland County HealthCare System
- Cleveland County Schools
- Cleveland Co. Sheriff's Department
- Cleveland Regional Medical Center Trauma Services
- Kings Mountain Police Department
- Kiwanis Club
- N.C. Highway Patrol
- Nurse/Family Partnership
- Partnership for Children
- Shelby Children's Clinic
- Shelby Fire Department
- Shelby Police Department
- Shelby Surgical Associates
- YMCA
- And interested individuals

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