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Peggy K. Schunk 201-996-3586

MEDICAL CENTER HOSTS VIDEO PREMIERE

The Trauma/Surgical Critical Care and Injury Prevention Section of the Department of Surgery at Hackensack University Medical Center (HUMC) hosted the video premiere of *Universal Safety Squad – A Seatbelt and Booster Seat Educational Program*, geared toward school-aged children, on the medical center's Hackensack campus. The *Bergen County Prosecutor's Office* and the *State of New Jersey Department of Human Services* provided educational grants, which made this program possible.

Speakers included John J. LoCurto, M.D., FACS, of Park Ridge, chief of the Trauma/Surgical Critical Care and Injury Prevention Section of the Department of Surgery at HUMC and clinical assistant professor of surgery at the University of Medicine and Dentistry New Jersey (UMDNJ) – New Jersey Medical School; John L. Molinelli, prosecutor of the Bergen County Prosecutor's office; Pam Fischer, of Long Valley, director and governor's representative, New Jersey Division of Highway Safety; Arthur L. Yeager, D.M.D., MMH; and Rich D'Elia, owner of Chase Wilson, a

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multimedia communications company and executive producer of the video.

State law requires that a newborn must have a car seat to leave a hospital. In addition, children under one-year old and weighing less than 20 pounds should be restrained in a rear facing car seat in the back seat of the vehicle. When the child is at least age one and 20 pounds, he or she can ride forward facing in a car seat in the backseat of the vehicle. Once a child is 40 pounds or has reached the maximum weight limit for his forward facing child seat, he or she should ride in a booster seat, which ensures the proper fit of the seatbelt.

New Jersey law requires children under eight years of age or 80 pounds to ride in a booster seat. Certified child passenger safety technicians recommend that even once a child reaches either of these milestones, he or she not graduate to a seatbelt alone until he or she is at least four feet, nine inches tall, can sit all the way back against the car seat back and his or her knees bend naturally over the seat. All children 12 and younger should ride in the back seat.

“Proper use of child safety seats and seatbelts is the most effective way to save your children’s lives in the event of a motor vehicle crash. We urge you to buckle up and to teach your children to do the same,” said Dr. LoCurto. “Adults who don’t buckle up are sending children a deadly message that it is alright not to wear a seatbelt, and since children model adult behavior, this can cripple your family.”

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“If we can save one child, that is something we can not put a price tag on,” said John L. Molinelli, Bergen County prosecutor, who noted grant funds were provided through dollars seized in criminal cases and were not provided through taxpayer dollars.

“I stand before you today with greetings from Governor Corzine, who knows better than anyone, the importance of wearing a seatbelt,” said Pam Fischer, of Long Valley, director and governor’s representative, New Jersey Division of Highway Safety. “Through videos like this, our children learn to wear seatbelts every ride, every time, and this is a message they carry home to their parents and prevent the devastating damage of a vehicular accident.”

All Bergen County elementary schools or town representatives present received complimentary video copies of the *Universal Safety Squad – A Seatbelt and Booster Seat Educational Program*.

For more information or to learn how to receive a copy of the video, please call Meliam Gonzales, RN, at the Trauma Center at 201-996-2672. For more information about HUMC, please visit www.humc.com.

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Pictured from left are: John L. Higgins, assistant prosecutor of the Bergen County Prosecutor's Office; Pat Nierstedt, RN, of Hasbrouck Heights, Trauma Nurse coordinator at Hackensack University Medical Center (HUMC); Pam Fischer, of Long Valley, director and governor's representative, New Jersey Division of Highway Safety; Meliam Gonzales, RN, trauma prevention coordinator and clinical educator at HUMC; John L. Molinelli, Bergen County Prosecutor; John J. LoCurto, M.D., FACS, of Park Ridge, chief of the Trauma/Surgical Critical Care and Injury Prevention Section of the Department of Surgery at HUMC; and Rich D'Elia of Chase Wilson, a multimedia communications company, prepare to enjoy some popcorn during the premiere of *Universal Safety Squad – A Seatbelt and Booster Seat Educational Program*, geared for school-aged children, on the medical center's Hackensack campus.