

Stuffed animals used as safety tool in new program

By Linda Friedel The Kansas City Nursing News Posted on August 7, 2013 by [Linda Friedel](#)



Linda Friedel | The Kansas City Nursing News Gina Shay-Zapien, MSN, APRN, RNC, CNS-BC, perinatal clinical nurse specialist and child safety technician at Family Birthing Center at Menorah Medical Center helped to launch a new program that reminds parents not to leave their infants in the car. On July 31, National Heat Stroke Prevention Day, parents in the birthing center received a stuffed animal to use as a memory device in the car.

Anne and Randy Brown, proud parents of their newborn daughter, Palmer, got an unexpected gift before they drove her home from the hospital. Someone handed them a fluffy stuffed animal named Chance, explaining to them it was theirs to keep and not their son's.

The Browns accepted the free gift, thanked the representative, and said they would definitely incorporate Chance into their lives.

"That's actually a great idea," Anne, of Raymore, Mo., said.

Sally Davisson, volunteer with the nonprofit agency Kids and Cars, gave the new parents a stuffed animal to use as a marker to remind them to always take their child out of the car after reaching their destination. Davisson has advocated for child safety for several years through Kids and Cars, but helped to launch a new program that puts a toy animal's face to the program. Sometimes parents forget their child, she said. It is a deadly mistake. Davisson said there have been 24 deaths this year nationwide due to heat stroke when children were left alone in cars.

"It can happen to anyone," Davisson said. "It's almost always distraction."



Sally Davisson, a volunteer with Kids and Cars nonprofit organization, delivers a free stuffed animal to new parents Randy and Anne Brown of Raymore, Mo. In honor of National Heat Stroke Prevention Day, Davisson offered free stuffed animals to new parents at Menorah Medical Center Birthing Center. The stuffed animals are used as a reminder for parents that their child is in the vehicle. Distracted parents sometimes leave their child in the car, which has resulted in 24 deaths nationwide this year.

Davisson offered Chance and Lucky, a stuffed cat, to new parents throughout the morning of July 31 at The Family Birthing Center at Menorah Medical Center. Davisson and nurses in the labor and delivery unit teamed up to give the stuffed animals to new parents on the unit. Parents were instructed to place the stuffed animal in the child's car seat when their child is not using the seat. When they buckle the baby into the seat, parents should move the stuffed animal to the front seat. It serves as a reminder that their child is in the car and needs to be taken with them when they leave.



Nurses in the Family Birthing Center at Menorah Medical Center were part of a new safety campaign recently as part of National Heat Stroke Prevention Day. The birthing center partnered with nonprofit, Kids and Cars to give free stuffed animals to new parents to use in their cars. The stuffed animal is placed in the front seat as a reminder their child are in the car. From left is Kathy Jackson, RNC, MSN, Family Birthing Center/Women's Services director, and Kathleen Wright, RN, BSN, labor and delivery nurse.

The initiative launched on National Heat Stroke Prevention Day. Davisson said she works with labor and delivery units throughout the metro on child safety issues, but initiated the stuffed animal program at Menorah Medical Center. Kids and

Cars plans to introduce the program to other area birthing centers. They hope to be in eight markets eventually, she said.

“This is a new program with us,” Davisson said. “Hospitals, mainly birth centers, are our primary goal.”

Gina Shay-Zapien, MSN, APRN< RNC, CNS-BC, perinatal clinical nurse specialist, is the child passenger safety technician at Menorah’s Family Birthing Center. Shay-Zapien has partnered with Kids and Cars for several years on numerous child safety initiatives. Until the stuffed animal program took shape this month, the birthing center gave Look Before you Lock safety cards. The cards list safety strategies related to children and cars. Strategies include placing something in the back seat of your vehicle that requires you to open the back door every time you park. It could be a cell phone, employee badge or handbag. Shay-Zapien said the reason a parent can forget their child ranges from taking a new route to work to parents switching who will drop their child off at the day care center. No one leaves their child in the car intentionally, she said.

“It’s usually a case of distraction,” Shay-Zapien said. “It’s often a change in schedules.”

Shay-Zapien said Kids and Cars contacted her about the stuffed animal program. She was happy to add the tool, she said. It is a tangible way to remind parents, she said.

“We try so hard to focus on healthy moms and healthy babies,” she said. “This is one thing we can provide for parents. It’s easy to do. It keeps their baby safe.”



Kids and Cars and Menorah Medical Center partnered to launch a new program recently at Menorah Medical Center’s Family Birthing Center. Kids and Cars provides free stuffed animals for new parents to use as a safety tool. The stuffed animal is used as marker in vacant infant seats, then moved to the front seat when infant is buckled into car seat. The stuffed animal becomes a reminder for parents to take their baby with them when they leave the car.

Kathy Jackson, RNC, MSN, director of the Family Birthing Center at Menorah Medical Center said the birthing center will incorporate the stuffed animals into their safety program for new parents. New parents will have an opportunity to go home with stuffed animal

and their safety checklist, she said.

“There’s your visual reminder,” she said. “That’s what the card has recommended for two years. To celebrate the day, there’s a visual reminder.”

There have been no infant deaths related to heat stroke from cars in the Kansas City area this year, Jackson said. Jackson said the family featured on the Safety Checklist card lost their 6-month-old daughter when she died of heat stroke. She had been left in the car, inadvertently due to a day of distractions. Families share their stories on the Kids and Cars website, www.KidsAndCars.org, Jackson said. Distractions can include rainstorms, traffic, work, a change in routes and a sleeping baby.

“You don’t see them,” Jackson said. “And there’s that distraction factor.”

The temperature in a car, even if the outside temperature is in the 70s, can rise quickly in a car with the windows closed, Jackson said. The temperature can accelerate to 125 degrees fairly fast, she said. Infants are sensitive to temperature change. Their core temperature rises fast, she said. Cars can heat up within 10 to 15 minutes and infants can die within 30 minutes, Jackson said.

“It’s the dehydration,” Jackson said. “Babies will be in critical condition. Never leave children in a car.”

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