

'Look before you lock' campaign aims at preventing child heat deaths

Wednesday, Aug. 07, 2013 By TERI SCHAEFER, Special to The Star



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As part of an education campaign on National Heat Stroke Prevention Day to help parents avoid forgetting a baby in a hot parked car, volunteer Sally Davisson (left) with KidsAndCars.org presented new parents Randy and Anne Brown and their daughter Palmer, of Raymore, with a stuffed animal Wednesday morning at the Family Birthing Center at Menorah Medical Center. The campaign suggests keeping the stuffed animal in the car seat, then when you put the baby in the car seat, move the stuffed animal to

the front seat as a visual reminder not to forget the baby when you leave the car.

New mother Anne Brown cuddled her baby daughter Palmer Royce on Wednesday at Menorah Medical Center and wondered how it would feel.

How the guilt would crush her and her husband, Randy, if either of them were to accidentally and innocently kill their daughter.

It's not hard to imagine being a harried and hurried new parent, sleep deprived, rushing off to work and leaving the baby in the back seat of the car — where the heat can rise to fatal temperatures over 100 degrees.

"I think it would tear us apart," said Anne Brown.

"I was a single dad for awhile. Safety is number one for me," said Randy Brown. "I lost my mom to murder and my dad to cancer when I was 15 and 17."

So that these parents can be as safe as they want to be, Menorah Medical Center and KidsAndCars.org, which is based in Kansas City, Kan., have allied to help parents "Look Before You Lock."

KidsAndCars.org has received a shipment of stuffed toy dogs and cats from an Anchorage, Alaska, Petsmart that had thousands of the animals left after Christmas. Petsmart and an Anchorage transportation company moved the toy cargo by ship, plane and truck. They've given the stuffed animals to KidsAndCars.org, which is distributing the toys to eight metropolitan areas, including Kansas City.

Parents are urged to keep a stuffed animal in their baby's car seat, and then move the toy to the front seat when they buckle their child in. The toy in the front seat is meant to remind them that their baby is in the back.

"Also put something in the back seat of your vehicle that requires you to open the back door every time you stop — cell phone, handbag, briefcase," said Janette Fennell, founder of KidsAndCars. "That shows you that your infant or toddler is in the back seat."

Fennell says child deaths in overheated cars skyrocketed when, in 1995, parents were told the safest place for their babies and small children was in a back car seat.

"We knew it was a problem many years ago," said Menorah nurse Gina Shay-Zapien, who teaches new parents about safety. "Congrats on your new baby. Here's something else to worry about. 'Don't leave your baby in the car' wasn't enough," Shay-Zapien said.

She called the stuffed dogs and cats valuable new tools in the campaign for child safety.

"It (an infant death by heat stroke in a car) usually happens when a parent is hurrying around, trying to get everything done at once. But for some reason, he breaks his routine and there's a disconnect in the brain," said Fennell.

Out of their regular routines, parents can more easily forget that they never dropped the baby off at a day-care center. Fennell has previously helped promote national legislation that requires a latch inside trunks of vehicles made beginning in 2002 so anyone who has been put in the trunk can and escape.

She fought for the law because she and her husband were carjacked in San Francisco and locked in their own car trunk. Because of the crime, she founded KidsAndCars.org to make cars safer, and moved her family to Kansas City, Kan.

Back at Menorah Medical Center on Wednesday, the Browns were ready to put baby Palmer into her car seat, place her stuffed animal in the front seat and take her home for the first time, feeling a bit safer.

<http://www.theolathenews.com/2013/08/07/2044207/look-before-you-lock-campaign.html>