



Courtesy photo

Catie Wiedenhofer, right, director of the Safe Kids San Angelo program, shows the proper way to restrain a child in a car seat. During the Aug. 27 Healthy Woman event, Wiedenhofer and a half-dozen nationally certified car seat technicians will be at Scenic Mountain Medical Center to inspect and, if necessary, replace for free child restraint systems.

Healthy Woman event to focus on buckling kids up

Free car seats will be provided to those who need them

By **STEVE REAGAN**

Staff Writer

When listing all the things parents can do for their children, properly installing a car seat usually doesn't come to mind.

But having the right kind of car seat in

your vehicle and, more importantly, making sure your child is properly restrained may be among the most important things parents ever do, officials say.

Car seat safety will be the topic for this

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month's Healthy Woman event, scheduled for 8 a.m. until noon Aug. 27 at the Scenic Mountain Medical Center north parking lot.

Catie Wiedenhofer, director of the Safe Kids San Angelo program at San Angelo Community Medical Center (SMMC's sister hospital), will be on hand to not only talk about the benefits of properly installed child restraint systems in automobiles, but will also inspect and — if necessary — replace for free attendees' car seats.

Child safety is more than just a passing fancy for Wiedenhofer, who earned the nickname of "Helmet Lady"

in the 1990s by wearing a red, white a blue helmet while talking to children about bicycle safety — it's a mission.

"The No. 1 killer of kids under the age of 14 is accidents," Wiedenhofer said. "And the leading killer in that category is vehicle crashes. If we don't do something to make our children safer, they will continue to be killed needlessly in accidents."

SMMC and the Healthy Woman program are putting their money where Wiedenhofer's mouth is — during the Aug. 27 program, parents can bring their car seats in for inspection. If they are found to not meet safety standards, they will be replaced for free while supplies last.

Wiedenhofer urges parents to take advantage of this program,

even if they believe their current car seats pass safety muster.

"If a car seat is older than six years, it's automatically considered unsafe and will be replaced. If the parent is unsure of the seat's history, it is automatically considered unsafe and will be replaced," she said. "If you got the car seat at a garage sale, or if the straps have been washed a lot, they're automatically considered unsafe."

Not only does having the proper kind of child

restraint system in your car make good sense, it's also the law. Any child under the age of 8 riding in an automobile in Texas must be restrained.

Weidenhofer and about a half-dozen nationally certified car seat technicians will inspect and help install the car seats at the event.

Providing the free car seats makes good sense for the hospital in more than one way, Wiedenhofer said.

"First of all, they're helping to save lives," she said. "And statisti-

cally speaking, each car seat saves \$32 in health-care costs nationally."

For more information on the event, contact Healthy Woman Coordinator Kim Howell at 268-4842.

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