

Sizing up safety value of bicycle helmets

By BARBARA PIERCE

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Local bicycle enthusiasts joined personnel from the Charlotte County Sheriff's Office and the Charlotte County Health Department on Wednesday as Sarita Taylor of the Florida Department of Transportation presented a helmet-fitting seminar.

More children ages 5 to 14 go to hospital emergency rooms for injuries associated with bicycles than with any other activity or sport, according to a Florida Department of Health news release. Many of these injuries involve the head. Helmet laws help ensure the safety of children, but a helmet that does not fit properly is almost like not wearing any helmet at all. Children whose helmets fit poorly are at twice the risk of head injury in a crash.

"There is no cure for brain injury," Taylor said. "Brain injury can change everything about you. It can cause seizures, which may not begin until years after the injury."

Participants were certified to properly fit bicycle helmets. The trained certified helmet fitters will be able to ensure that children in Charlotte County have properly fitting helmets available to them.

The single most effective safety device to reduce head injury and death from bicyclerelated crashes is a properly fitting helmet.

Eric Stockley of the Health Department and of the Peace River Riders organized the event. The Health Department is trying to become more proactive in the health of children. The pediatric staff of the department will ensure that all kids who come in have a helmet, if they ride a bike.



SUN PHOTOS BY BARBARA PIERCE

Presenter Sarita Taylor demonstrates how to correctly fit a bicycle helmet on Deputy Dan Cotton as Deputy Gordon Eldridge observes.



Rob Dunaway of Peace River Riders fits Tom Ponder of SCORE (Special Cardiac Outdoor Recreation).