



PRESS RELEASE
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ELLIOT HEALTH SYSTEM AND THE MANCHESTER POLICE DEPARTMENT TEAM UP TO LEAD BIKE HELMET SAFETY PROGRAM

"The mission is simple: Put an appropriate, protective helmet on the head of every young person who rides a bicycle!" Dr. Mark Myers of Elliot Health System's "i-Imagine" program.

Manchester, NH – Protecting the young people of our city from bicycling related head trauma is an important priority, and the goal of a new Bicycle Helmet Safety Program initiated by Elliot Health System's "i-Imagine" program, in collaboration with the Manchester Police Department. "The mission is simple: Put an appropriate, protective bike helmet on the head of every young person who rides a bicycle!" said Dr. Mark Myers of Elliot Health System. To achieve maximum effectiveness Elliot enlisted the help of officers from the Manchester Police Department's "Community Policing Unit" who patrol on bicycles themselves.

The idea was conceived by Dr. Myers, an Elliot pediatrician and a member of Elliot Health System's "i-Imagine" committee. "i-Image" is a team of Elliot Health System members who oversee funding for community projects conceived by Elliot staff that advance good health within the community and improve wellness for the general population.

Dr. Myers explained that he sees young victims with concussions and other needless head trauma resulting from bicycle crashes at his practice on an all too frequent basis. "The damage is often cumulative, so implementing a program that minimizes the potential for children to sustain this type of head injury is incredibly important," Myers said.

Myers viewed a recent change in New Hampshire bicycle helmet laws as an opportunity for improvement, so approached i-Imagine for funding and Sergeant Kevin Kincaid of the city's Community Policing Unit for implementation. Kincaid's officers patrol on bicycles. Dr. Myers' plan involves putting helmets on the heads of children who might not otherwise be able to afford them through collaboration between Elliot and the Manchester Police Department. Instead of issuing a summons to parents or guardians of children who do not have helmets, the plan allows police officers to hand out vouchers that may then be exchanged for a free bicycle helmet at "The Bike Barn," a shop in Manchester's historic mill yard area.

After reviewing Myers' plan, Elliot's i-Imagine Committee allocated \$25,000 to the program to cover the Bike Barn costs for the helmets that will be issued throughout the summer.

“Elliot and Dr. Myers have initiated a great concept and we’re excited to be able to help make this happen,” said Manchester Police Chief John Jaskolka. “This is a great partnership for the police department and the community.”

“We would much rather see a child given an opportunity to get a free helmet than issue a ticket to their parent or guardian. Especially for a helmet they may not otherwise have,” said Sergeant Kincaid. “The program is already under way, and the officers that patrol our city on bicycles have responded with a lot of enthusiasm.”

Elliot Health System is the largest provider of comprehensive healthcare services in Southern New Hampshire, the cornerstone of which is Elliot Hospital, a 296-bed acute care facility and the first community hospital in the state. Elliot is home to Manchester’s designated Regional Trauma Center, a Level 3 Newborn Intensive Care Unit, Elliot Physician Network, Elliot Regional Cancer Center, the Elliot Senior Health Center, Visiting Nurse Association of Manchester and Southern New Hampshire and Elliot 1-Day Surgery Center. For more information on any of Elliot’s services, call ELLIOT ON-CALL at 663-4567 or visit the website at www.elliotohospital.org.

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