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## **Sweet Incentives Help Keep Kids Safe**

Coronado, CA -- Ever since Mary Poppins added her legendary spoonful of sugar, sweetening the medicine has been a tried and true method for winning kids' approval. Now Sharp HealthCare's Think First program has come up with a modern version of this age-old tactic by offering cool and creamy incentives to promote Coronado kids' safety.

Here's the scoop. Beginning this month, Sharp HealthCare's Think First Injury and Violence Prevention program kicks off a community partnership designed to reward Coronado youngsters who show smart safety skills. The local police and fire departments and the Coronado School District will be issuing special citations - called Safety Bucks - to kids who show smart safety behavior. The Bucks can then be redeemed for free ice cream cones at the local Dairy Queen, Mootime Creamery, or Baskin-Robbins ice cream shops.

The shops are dishing out half the cost of the cones while the other half is being covered by Coronado Hospital Foundation, a long-time Think First supporter and one of the key partners in this community-wide collaboration. Since the inception of Coronado's Think First chapter, the Foundation has provided the program with funds totaling \$12,000.

“Coronado Hospital Foundation has really spearheaded our efforts to keep kids safe,” says Dorothy Zirkle, program manager of the local Think First program. “They've been closely involved with the other community groups in supporting this, and have been absolutely instrumental in bringing the message of safety to Coronado's kids.”

Once the program gets underway, local police officers, fire fighters, and school teachers will start distributing the Bucks for behaviors that include wearing a helmet while bicycling, using the crosswalk, and looking left-right-left before crossing the street. The Safety Bucks program also incorporates a special curriculum that will be taught in elementary and middle school classrooms to teach children the basics of a safe and active lifestyle.

Zirkle says that education and community cooperation are the key features of this latest project. "The safety coupons were designed to be informative and to open discussion between the kids, the police officers, the teachers, and the parents." A checklist of good safety practices is printed on each Buck, so police officers and parents can refer to the list and encourage the child to continue using safe behavior.

With their creation of a campaign that brings the community together, promotes the safety of school children, and provides an all-but-irresistible incentive, Think First has developed the kind of sweet deal that would make Mary Poppins proud. And as for Coronado's kids, they can start looking forward to a whole new way of earning their just desserts.

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