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OU event shows parents how to buckle up kids

By **Jennifer Charney**, OU staff writer

There's much more to using a child safety seat than just strapping it in a vehicle. That's what 60 parents learned at the Child Seat Safety Program at Oakland University on July 30. OU invited the public for free inspections by certified technicians including Troy Scott, an OU police officer and child passenger safety technician and instructor.

Traffic crashes are the leading cause of death for children ages four to eight, according to **Boost America**, a program of Ford Motor Company, which sponsored the event with the **OU Police Department** and the **International Center for Injury Protection**. Nearly one-third of kids in that age group ride unbelted; fewer than seven percent use booster seats. These factors contribute to the deaths of more than 500 children each year.

Nationwide, eight out of 10 booster seats are used incorrectly, Scott said. Of the seats he checks by appointment, 95 percent are used incorrectly. "It's everything from the seat not being in tightly, to the straps not being snug, to the harness not being in the correct position," Scott said.

At the inspection event, technicians completed 60 car seat checks and ensured parents and other guardians were using the right seats for their children's height and weight. They also checked for seat recalls, and proper seat installation and use.

Clio Poczatek, of Rochester Hills, brought her minivan, child car seats, two kids and niece to the inspection at OU's **Lowry Center for Early Childhood Education**.

"I think I know what I'm doing, but it's always good to get professional input," Poczatek said. She ended up learning a lot.

Among other things, Scott found one of Poczatek's child seats wasn't adjusted for her child's weight. When used as a five-point-harness, forward-facing child seat, the harness can only restrain 40 pounds. Her child weighs 40 pounds, so Scott removed the harness to use the seat as a booster. Booster seats position kids so that adult safety belts fit properly. They raise the child so the lap belt rests across the hips and the shoulder belt reaches across the shoulder, not the neck. Children need to use booster seats until they weigh about 80 pounds, usually when they are eight years old.

Scott is among the 20 Michigan child passenger safety instructors certified by the **National Highway Traffic Safety Administration**. To make an appointment for a free car seat check, anyone may call Scott at (248) 370-3331 or e-mail him at tscott@oakland.edu.

Other tips on child safety seats:

- Never use a child seat after it's been in an accident.
- Infants should ride in a rear-facing seat at least until they are a year old and weigh at least 20 pounds.
- Children should ride facing forward in a toddler seat until they weigh 40 pounds -- at about age four -- or when their ears reach the top of the toddler seat.
- Read your booster instructions and your vehicle owner's manual before using the booster seat.

SUMMARY

Dozens of parents learned at the Child Seat Safety Program at Oakland University that there's more to using the seats than just strapping them in a vehicle.

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