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Safety behind bike helmet program

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Free Press Reporter

A friend isn't worth having if he doesn't wear a bike helmet.

That's what Grade 4 pupil Chase Richardson said he would say if he was teased about wearing his helmet.

"You might not have a friend if you wear it, but at least you'll be safe," said Richardson, 9, a pupil at Knollwood public school.

The Ontario Trial Lawyers Association and the Brain Injuries Association of London and Region launched their Helmets on Kids campaign with an assembly at the school yesterday for the Grades 4, 5 and 6 pupils.

The two groups handed out 450 helmets at 29 London schools yesterday. An additional 200 will be handed out by the Middlesex-London Health Unit.

The helmets are being given to pupils who might not be able to afford them, said organizer Barbara Legate, a member of the trial lawyers association which donated them.

She based the program on successful campaigns in the United States.

Legate said in her line of work she sees too many children suffer brain injuries because they don't wear bicycle helmets.

"We represent the little guy," Legate said.

"(Kids) think that they're invincible. I think things like this make kids realize that safety is really important."

Leigh Anne Ryan,
Knollwood public school teacher

"It's not fun when it's a child with a brain injury. They are so preventable because bike helmets are so effective."

A year ago, 10-year-old Brian Douglas Cooper of London was hit by a van and killed while riding his bike home from his grandmother's house.

Legate said the accident has brought the need for safety home for many children in the community.

Leigh Anne Ryan, a teacher at Knollwood public school was supply teaching at F.D. Roosevelt, Cooper's school, when the accident happened.

She said Cooper's death underscored the need for greater bike safety.

"(Kids) think that they're invincible," she said. "I think things like this make kids realize that safety is really important."

Ryan said times have changed when it comes to bicycle helmets.

"The kids have grown up wearing them now, so it's easier to get them to use them," she said.

"That wasn't a part of my childhood."

All children under the age of 16 are required under the Highway Traffic Act to wear a helmet when riding a bicycle.

The Canadian Institute of Health Information said bike-related injuries among children have declined 26 per cent since helmets became mandatory.