

## **A Five-Second Walk around the Car Could Prevent More Than 200 Deaths per Year to Children**

### **Safe Kids Columbus reminds parents to spot their tot before starting the engine**

**Columbus, GA** – In that rush to get to the store before it closes, or in the frenzy of getting the entire family in the car to go to Grandma’s house, the focus is often on what is in the car – not what is around it. Safe Kids Columbus encourages anyone driving a car to walk completely around it to check for children, pets, or toys before getting in and starting the engine.

In the United States in 2007, it is estimated that there were 5,000 injuries and 205 deaths to children under age 14 as a result of being hit by a vehicle in a driveway or parking area. These incidences are known as “backovers” or “frontovers,” depending on direction.

“We believe these injuries and deaths are preventable as too many result from a driver not seeing children who might be playing, running after, or standing near their vehicle,” says Christy Hubbard, Safe Kids Columbus coordinator. “What is truly tragic about these stories is that oftentimes, the drivers are friends or even family members.”

Parents and caregivers can follow these free, low-tech tips to help make sure that children remain safe around vehicles:

- Before getting in the car and starting the engine – walk all the way around the parked vehicle to make sure children and pets are not under or behind it. When possible, engage older kids as helpers to accomplish this.
- Use a “Spot the Tot” window sticker as a reminder to walk completely around the vehicle before every trip. Contact Safe Kids Columbus for information on how to obtain one of these stickers.
- Ensure that young children are always accompanied by an adult when getting in and out of a vehicle.
- Talk to your children and identify a safe play area for them to use far away from parked or moving vehicles.
- Identify a safe spot for children to go when nearby vehicles are about to move.
- When walking near moving vehicles, in driveways, in parking lots, or on sidewalks – make sure to firmly hold the hand of each child that is with you.
- Avoid using driveways as play areas if moving cars have access entering or exiting these areas.

“No matter how important it is at that moment for you to get to your destination on time,” says Hubbard, “taking a five-second walk around your car to make sure that children are not in harm’s way could save your family and your child from a lifetime of physical and emotional pain.”

To learn more about keeping your children safe in and around cars, visit:

<http://www.usa.safekids.org/skbu/cars/spotthetot.html>. The Spot the Tot program, created by Safe Kids Utah, was extended to all Safe Kids coalitions in 2006.

Spot the Tot is a part of the Safe Kids Buckle Up Program, the comprehensive child passenger safety program of Safe Kids USA in partnership with General Motors. The Safe Kids Buckle Up Program has been inspecting child safety seats for correct installation and educating families about how to be safer in and around vehicles since 1997. Over the past 12 years, Safe Kids has held approximately 52,000 vehicle safety events for families and checked more than a million car seats for proper installation. The program has also donated more than 367,000 child safety seats to families in need. In addition, the program has created innovative activities that go beyond crash protection by educating families on other dangers children face in and around vehicles such as hyperthermia and backover/frontover risks.

*For more information about your local coalition activities, visit [www.safekidscolumbusga.com](http://www.safekidscolumbusga.com). Safe Kids Columbus works to prevent accidental childhood injury, the leading killer of children 14 and under. Its members include public safety agencies, teachers, EMTs, county commissioners, health educators, nurses, civic groups, faith-based*

*organizations, public health organizations, local government, and many others concerned about the well being of our children. Safe Kids Columbus is a member of Safe Kids Worldwide, a global network of organizations dedicated to preventing accidental injury. Safe Kids Columbus was founded in 1998 and is led by the Columbus Health Department.*

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