

Backpack Safety

Rose Jacobs, CA

This past February, I noticed a periodical displaying a Congress of Chiropractic State Associations (COCSA) proclamation of April 2002 as National Backpack Safety Month. (*Editor's note: See "COCSA to Launch Nat'l Backpack Safety Month in April" in the Feb. 25, 2002 issue of DC, or on line at www.chiroweb.com/archives/20/05/04.html*). The promotion introduced a backpack safety kit for purchase through COCSA. As our clinic's director of community relations, I reviewed the system. It was reasonably priced, and I was impressed with the professionalism of the kit and the program's accompanying "how-to" manual. I realized immediately that, other than needing to purchase additional brochures, this program had everything our clinic needed to carry on the program for many months.

To begin my plan of action, I wrote a letter to my local school superintendent telling him about the importance of such a program in the elementary schools. We would be doing this as a community service at no cost to the school system, I noted, and added that unless he had any objection, I would be sending a letter out to all of the physical education teachers in his area offering the class. Not only did he not object, he made a community announcement at the following week's Rotary Club meeting, where our clinic's doctor is an active member, letting all the members know of the program and publicly thanking the doctor for offering a "much-needed program to the children of our community." He was applauded by his peers.

I wish that every one of the teachers had invited us to give the program after receiving my letter, but only a handful contacted us. However, in April, I conducted this program for over 700 students, which is a great start for the program's first year. One lesson I've learned is that I need to start offering it earlier in the school year, because there was little time left for students to use backpacks in school by April; it was not the best month to begin the program, according to the teachers in our area.

With all the wonderful tools sent to me in this kit, I contacted the public library in town and asked if I could set up a backpack safety display in one of its large display cases. The library director was thrilled to help. She gave our clinic a prime area in the entrance of the library, and insisted we have a sign in the display that identified our clinic as the sponsor, including the clinic's logo. Nothing like free marketing! When I went to remove the display, the staff made the comment not to forget them next year. They assured me that any time I had alternative health information that we wanted to display, they would be happy to help.

I also contacted several safety directors of companies to ask if I could display backpack safety information. Two of the companies agreed, and invited us to be a part of their summer health fairs for their employees and families. This will be the first time a chiropractic office was invited to have a booth at their annual health fairs.

My plans for this summer also include using the backpack safety information to promote our clinic's pediatric care in our community's "Children's Health and Safety Fair." We will have a booth to check children's posture, display ergonomic backpacks that can be purchased in our clinic, and our doctor will do a 20-minute stage presentation on backpack safety.

The Sunday before the program, our clinic will be sponsoring a coloring contest in a special section of the local newspaper. The artists at the paper are designing a backpack safety coloring page that the children will drop off at our booth. The first- place prize will be a backpack designed for one of three age categories. Second-place prizes will be free movie tickets, and third-place winners will receive free movie rentals. We are going to decorate our tent with the coloring pages. We will add the family names to our mailing list for future newsletters and promotions.

Our office is also co-sponsoring a "kids run" held Monday evenings from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m., for the first six weeks of the summer break. Backpack safety information and brochures will be available as a community service. We will have a tent near the starting line where we will take orders for the ergonomic backpacks. Parents will pick up the backpacks at the clinic, at which time we can give them a tour of our facility. We will also have balloons for the kids, and paper fans for any "overheated" parents. Bottled water will also be available in our tent. We will include a "register to win" drop box for free dinners and workshops to be held two times a month.

CAs: Backpack safety programs are a much-needed community service. Do your community a service: Get out there and promote spinal wellness! I can assure you, after the initial work is done, conducting the program is even more fun.

Until next time, go out and make a difference!

Rose Jacobs
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JULY 2002