



MEDIA RELEASE

Lakeland P.A.R.T.Y. Program Association

Taking Hold of the ATV Problem Where it Lives - In our Community

July 22, 2008-ATV and snowmobile related injuries are a staggering eruption right here and right now in our province and community. Lakeland P.A.R.T.Y., working with our various community partners and funded by the Alberta Traffic Safety Fund, endeavoured to do something about the problem this spring and summer, especially for youth in our community.

We recently launched a public education initiative entitled "ATV & Snowmobile Injuries in Youth: What we can tell you about the problem...and what you can tell us about the solution". This initiative brought together several groups of parents and others in a position to make decisions about ATV and snowmobile use in youth and has started to generate quite a buzz on the issues.

As we shared information and insights over 10 community sessions from April to June, we all learned a lot. Participants at the sessions discovered how, where, when, and to whom ATV injuries occur, for instance, and discussed ways to use this information to start fixing the problem. Statistics were a key focus of the sessions, but they were brought to life with real stories shared by participants and presenters alike delineating not just likelihoods but the realities that these injuries represent such as brutal disfigurement, economic havoc, emotional distress, and more.

P.A.R.T.Y. learned that most people were quite unaware of the staggering burden injuries from these recreational vehicles has become. People were truly taken aback to find out the real extent of the problem, and that in itself offered us serious insight into how it might start to be addressed. That is, these sessions suggest that the problem has bubbled along silently gaining steam, but that with rising awareness we are going to take hold of it. As an illustration, something we saw throughout the sessions with participants from all walks of life was that they were very willing to learn. They may have entered the sessions unaware, but they increased their scores on knowledge and awareness quizzes from a starting average of around 46% to consistently around 96 to 100%.

Participants also gained and shared excellent insights into the reasoning behind legislation and position statements making recommendations about ATV and snowmobile use by children. Moreover, these people took the sessions very seriously in not just learning about but also applying themselves admirably to solving the problems, generating a list of questions to be answered and steps to explore to potentially alleviate the seething monster in our midst.

They were more than empowered, they were armed and taking aim. Amongst the issues these parents and other community members want addressed are mandatory helmet laws, mandatory safety courses and licensing, rethinking of engineering, marketing, and sales strategies to encourage helmet use and other smart choices while riding, more public awareness of where the dangers are, toothy enforcement of existing law, etc.

Whereas the community education phase has ended for this year, other aspects of the project live on. P.A.R.T.Y. will continue working with our partners and supporters on this project, including the Alberta Centre for Injury Control and Research, AADAC, the City of Cold Lake Recreation Department, Victim's Services, Bonnyville Municipal Ambulance, the Cold Lake Ambulance Society, Glendon School, Ardmore School, Iron River School, Grand Centre Middle School, Nelson Heights School, Grand Centre High School, Alberta's Lakeland (Iron Horse Trail), and MADD Cold Lake Chapter in developing this project further, and we welcome any questions or ideas people may want to share. If you would like to book a session or just want more information about this ongoing project, please contact Audrey Karperien at 780 594 9959 or lakelandparty@telus.net.

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Lakeland P.A.R.T.Y. Program Association
Visit us on the web: <http://www.lakelandparty.ca/>

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