



# Street Smarts



Pedestrian and Bicycle  
Information Center

## Problem

Between the years 1996 and 2000, motor vehicle traffic crashes accounted for 50 percent of unintentional deaths for children between 0 and 19 years old in Santa Clara County. The county needed to address growing safety issues.

## Background

Recognizing that the root causes of accidents begin with unsafe driver, pedestrian, and cyclist behavior, the City of San José Department of Transportation undertook an expansive education campaign in November 2002. A campaign to change citizens' behavior regardless of whether there were speed bumps, police officers, or other engineering and enforcement measures in place.

## Solution

Their program attempts to bring about a fundamental change in traffic culture. The program operates on a grassroots level in schools and neighborhoods, and also has an extensive media component. The program is multi-lingual, with materials offered in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese.

Crash and citation data was reviewed to determine the top causes of accidents and to identify the most important behaviors to be targeted. The top five chosen were red-light running, stop sign violations, speeding, school zone violations, and crosswalk safety and compliance. In addition, though the target audience included all drivers, pedestrians, and cyclists, particular focus was placed on male drivers aged 18 to 25.

For work in the schools, the Street Smarts Back-to-School Traffic Safety Committee partnered with various City departments, school districts and partners such as the American Automobile Association (AAA). On the first day of school, the Police Department began enforcement in school zones. Over 120,000 school safety flyers were distributed in the three languages to all San José students, and parents were notified about the new enforcement measures. The Triple A funded 5,000 pedestrian safety posters for classrooms and 182 school safety fence banners were distributed to all elementary and middle schools. In addition, eight "Pedestrian and Bike Rodeos" were held at schools to teach safe practices, and parent education seminars were ongoing. More than 180 schools have participated to date.



Neighborhoods that adopt the Street Smarts program receive about three hours of driver, pedestrian, and bicycle behavior education and a Neighborhood Kit. The education consists of a humorous presentation by City staff, small group viewings of the Discovery channel's documentary entitled "Deadly Crossings: American Intersection," and group discussion. The kit contains lawn signs, safety tips, driving quizzes, bumper stickers, and other educational materials. Eleven neighborhoods adopted the program by 2004.

The media campaign included radio messages at peak drive times, print articles in several magazines including publications in Spanish and Vietnamese. Transit shelter and bus back displays were used, and the San Jose Sharks (the local ice-hockey team) helped sponsor the efforts, displaying messages at events and even having one player

## Street Smarts — San Jose, CA

pose for a media image with the caption, “Attitude is for the ice, keep it off the roads.” It is estimated that each four-week program reached 90 percent of residents within the city.

The total budget came to about \$845,000 for the first year, and \$250,000 for the second. For the first year, about \$316,000 went towards consultation services including program development, design, translation and materials printing. The other \$529,000 went towards media purchases in the three separate languages. As a service to other municipalities, the Street Smarts program was designed to be easily rebranded by other public agencies, and they may therefore purchase a rebranded format, ready-for-use, for a small fee of \$2500 paid to the design consultant. This represents a value of \$250,000 in design, market-testing, and strategy. AAA contributed a \$10,000 grant, as well as an in-kind donation of 5,000 full-color classroom safety posters.

### Results

Performance measures were established for the five target behaviors. Baseline data for each behavior was gathered by observation at specific locations citywide, and comparison data will be gathered for three years in order to record behavior change over time.

A survey conducted six months after the start of the program found that 62 percent of respondents felt raising awareness about behavior problems on roadways will encourage positive change, 32 percent had heard or seen Street Smart messages, and that 42 percent of those who had seen messages felt they had positively influenced their own behavior. The program is being integrated as a long term tool for traffic calming and school and neighborhood education.

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#### *Image Source*

*Street Smarts Program. [http://www.getstreetsmarts.org/pr\\_121702.htm](http://www.getstreetsmarts.org/pr_121702.htm)*

